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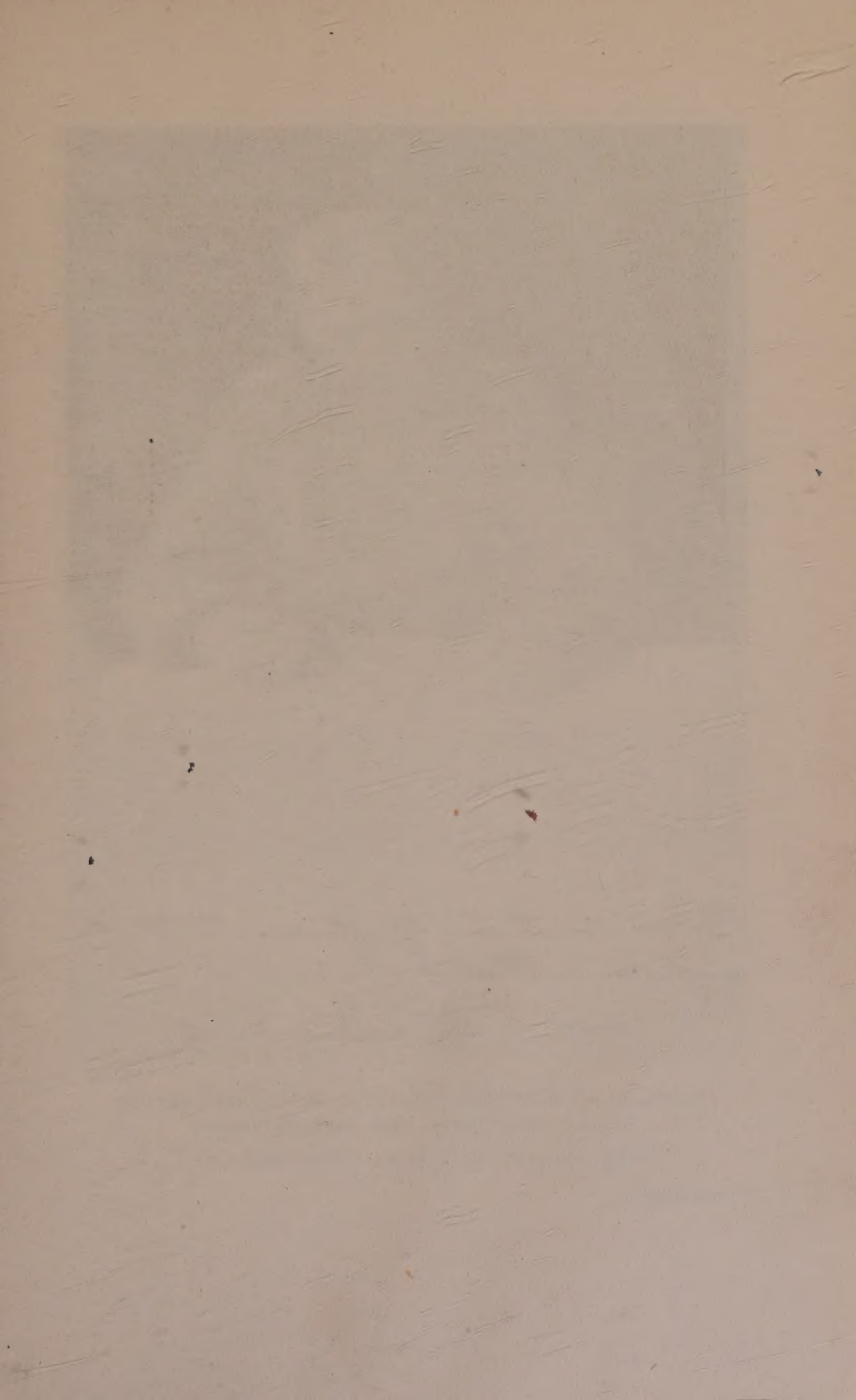
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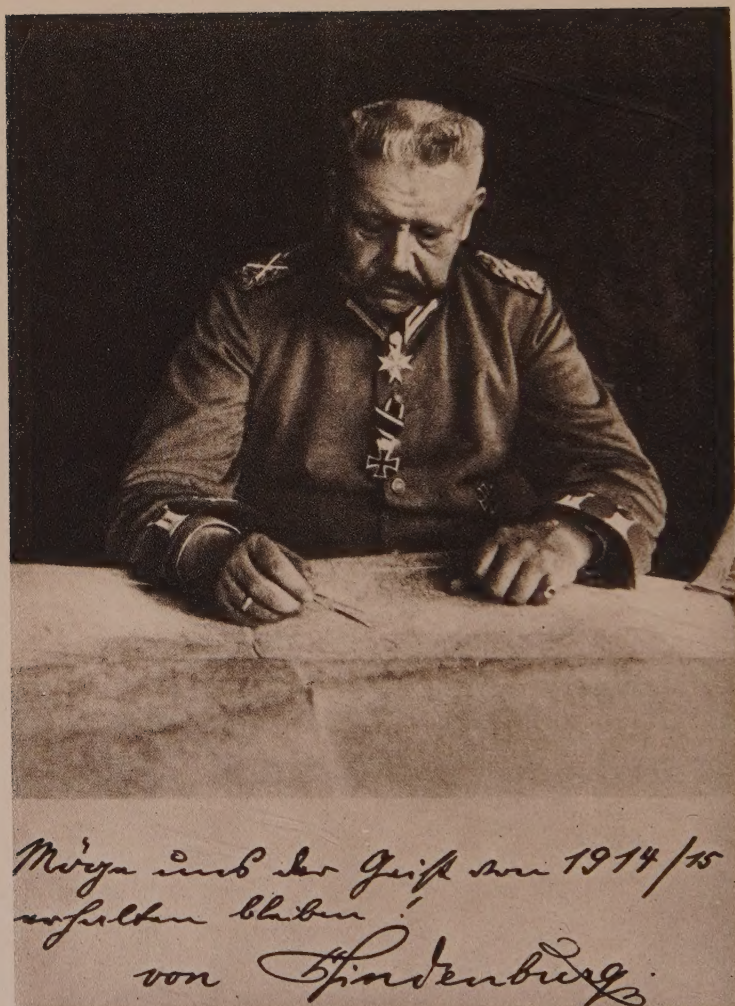
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THE BIOGRAPHY OF
PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG





E.N.A.

HINDENBURG STUDYING A MAP AT HIS HEADQUARTERS
DURING THE WAR. THE GERMAN READS,

"May the spirit of 1914-15 remain with us!"

(Frontispiece)

THE BIOGRAPHY OF ✓
PRESIDENT VON
HINDENBURG

BY
A. M. K. WATSON

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY LIFE AND MILITARY TRAINING

Union of the two military families, von Beneckendorff and von Hindenburg, in eighteenth century—Early history—Father's military career and marriage—Birth at Posen, 2nd October, 1847—Education and admittance to Military Academy—Removal to Berlin—Years of cadetship—Gazetted to 3rd Infantry Regiment of Guards pp. 17-25

CHAPTER TWO

CAMPAIGNS AGAINST AUSTRIA AND FRANCE

Early experience of active service—At war with Austria—Awarded Order of the Red Eagle—Narrow escape from death in action—Von Hindenburg's relations with his men—Early attraction of Hanover—At war with France—Severe engagement at St. Privat—Sedan—Siege of Paris—Consolidation of German States—Celebrations on proclamation of German Kaiser—Surrender of Paris—Return to Berlin pp. 26-39

CHAPTER THREE

A BRILLIANT MILITARY CAREER

Entry into *Kriegsakademie* (War Academy), 1873—Marriage—Appointment to General Staff—Deep understanding of men—Amusing incident during manœuvres—Hindenburg's tribute to Moltke—Promotion and further Staff appointments—Retirement—Residence in Hanover—Interests and achievements pp. 40-61

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TORCH OF WAR

European crisis—Austria's Ultimatum to Serbia—Italy's attitude—English and French views during fateful days preceding August 4th, 1914—Gathering storm—Austria's determination on war—Germany's Declaration of War against Russia and France—England's intervention following violation of Belgium's neutrality—A world war—Hindenburg watches its development pp. 62-70

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EASTERN CAMPAIGN

Hindenburg rejoins for service—Appointed leader of forces in the East—Close co-operation with Ludendorff—Tactics employed to stem Russian invasion—Defeat of Samsonoff's forces—Russian defeat at Tannenberg due to Hindenburg's strategy—His name acclaimed throughout the German Empire pp. 71-82

CHAPTER SIX

VICTORIES IN EAST PRUSSIA

Intended co-operation with Austrian forces—Hindenburg's difficult problem—Rennenkampf's costly indecision—Preparations for a great offensive—Russian retreat—Rout and defeat of Rennenkampf—Hindenburg a national hero pp. 83-92

CHAPTER SEVEN

ON THE SILESIAN FRONT

Political intervention in military operations—Support for Austria—A shared command—Activities on the Vistula—A fight against overwhelming

forces—Hindenburg's tremendous task—Lack of co-operation by Austrian commanders—German withdrawal—Appointed Commander-in-Chief of German Forces in the East—Approach of winter—Respite . pp. 93-105

CHAPTER EIGHT

IN SUPREME COMMAND

Activities renewed—Urgent political necessity of victory for Austria—Success of bold strategy—Russians in retreat—Fighting round Wilna—Rigours of a winter campaign—Russian offensive, Spring, 1916—News from other theatres of war—Rumania's entry into the war—Hindenburg appointed commander of the nation's military forces—National economic problems and food shortage—A united command . . . pp. 106-118

CHAPTER NINE

WEARYING WAR YEARS

Campaign against Rumania—Hindenburg's pride in his troops—Eastern campaign beset with difficulties—Fruitless attacks on Verdun—Strain on the German nation—On the Somme—Hindenburg's comment on Allied leaders pp. 119-125

CHAPTER TEN

THE WAR DRAGS ON

A soldier's dislike of politics—Question of Poland's independence—America's Declaration of War on Germany—Economic and social conditions in Germany—Smouldering dissatisfaction amongst the people—Hindenburg's plan unsupported—Danger threatening from West and East—Calls for aid from every Front—Effect of Russian Revolution—Defeat of Kerensky—English offensive of 1917 and capture of Arras—Hindenburg advises

strong attack on Italian Front—Cambrai—70th birthday—Gradual decay and starvation of Germany's allies—Political discord in Germany—Demoralizing effect on Army—Hindenburg's tribute to British tenacity and determination pp. 126-148

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PEACE AT LAST

Hindenburg's hopes in 1918—An offensive planned—Why the British Front was chosen—The attack launched—Advance on Amiens—The tide stemmed and Amiens held by Allies—German hopes run high—British and French forces fall back—Advance held—Counter-attack along entire front—British break through at Peronne—German retreat over all Western Front—Collapse of Bulgaria—Discontent in Germany—Hindenburg's appeal for unity—Asks to resign—Request refused—Riot and revolution—Kaiser's abdication and flight to Holland—Hindenburg, great soldier and great man, determines to remain with his Army—Armistice—Loyalty to Kaiser and appeal to Marshal Foch—Retirement to Hanover . . . pp. 149-171

CHAPTER TWELVE

A YEAR OF REST AND QUIET

Hanover's welcome to Hindenburg—Charges against former Generals—Hindenburg's love of children—His hopes for Germany's future
pp. 172-176

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE WEIMAR CONSTITUTION

Political affairs and new Constitution—Revised system of government—Sacrifice of quiet in retirement for national service—Presidential candidature pp. 177-180

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG

Conditions of acceptance of candidature—Hindenburg's message to the peoples of the German Empire—Overwhelming majority in Presidential election—Address delivered to the *Reichstag*—Acclaimed by the people pp. 181-187

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

BIRTH OF A NEW GERMANY

Entry on a difficult task—Efforts to unite and restore a torn and scattered nation—Sports replacement of compulsory military training in Germany—Hindenburg's encouragement of games—A sincere motive misunderstood in some foreign countries—Interest in horses and riding—Aims towards a united people in religion and education—Appeal for national "team work" in all things pp. 188-196

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

GERMANY AS A MILITARY POWER—THEN AND NOW

The Republican Army—Hindenburg's urge of tradition in new forces—Tributes to old comrades in arms—Germany's military standing to-day pp. 197-202

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

POST-WAR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Confidence of working people in new President—Problem of post-war industry—Position and condition of employers and employed—Introduction of new measures governing social affairs—German handling of

unemployment problem—Co-operation urged to defeat financial ruin pp. 203-208

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

LANDOWNERS AND THE STATE

Hindenburg's strong support by agriculturists—Difficulty of reconciling various factions in Germany—Protection of landowners and farmers—interest in agriculture—A keen hunter—Should land be governed by the State? pp. 209-216

CHAPTER NINETEEN

UNITY OF A NATION

Military efficiency and traits of Prussians—Their appreciation of Hindenburg—Celebration in Prussia on thousandth year of union with the German *Reich*—Hindenburg's travels and efforts to gain cohesion—Efforts towards his ideal, a united Germany pp. 217-230

CHAPTER TWENTY

HINDENBURG AS DIPLOMAT

Influence on the people of President's personality—Philosophic resignation of German people to post-war burdens—Relationship with foreign powers—A President outside party politics—American relations with Germany—Hindenburg's dignified appeal to European nations—A dignity and simplicity promoting admiration and confidence pp. 231-245

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Visit to evacuated Rhine districts—Appeal for understanding and unified effort—Hindenburg's greatness in achieving political success pp. 246-251

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

RESUSCITATION OF AN EMPIRE

Appreciation of minor Government officials—Importance of harmony in affairs of State—Hindenburg's strong belief in the "sacredness" of and necessity for justice—Spreading hope and encouragement throughout the Empire pp. 252-261

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE IN POST-WAR GERMANY

Effect of war on schools and universities—Assistance for art and science—Grants to libraries—Aid for medical research—Hindenburg's interest and assistance—German standard of learning—Influence as statesman equalled only by ability as soldier. pp. 262-272

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

Hindenburg's thought for Germans outside the Empire—Dispute on adoption of new national flag—The President's diplomacy—Presentation of first "German Ring"—Hindenburg's views on confiscation of the property of princes—A man of firm opinions, devotion and patriotism pp. 273-285

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

AN EMPIRE'S GRATITUDE

President's 80th birthday—The Empire's thanks—Years of constructive work—Dr. Guenther-Holstein's fine tribute pp. 286-294

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

GERMANY OF TO-DAY

Comparison of Hindenburg with Bismarck—A tower of strength through darkness and difficulty—Wisdom of President's policy shown in results—Political feeling in Germany—Strong communist party—Gradual economic improvement setting in—Call to the Empire's youth—Appeal for unity of Germans within and without the Empire . . . pp. 295-305

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

HINDENBURG—THE MAN

His life work—His character, qualities and abilities—The army, then and now—A man of deeds, not words—Unswerving devotion to duty—Sincere character and real greatness pp. 306-316

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

HINDENBURG STUDYING A MAP AT HIS HEADQUARTERS DURING THE WAR. THE GERMAN READS, “ <i>May the spirit of 1914-15 remain with us !</i> ”	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
HINDENBURG AS CADET IN 1866	49
HINDENBURG AS LIEUTENANT (3RD REGIMENT OF FOOT GUARDS)	64
HINDENBURG WITH THE KAISER AND LUDENDORFF AT GENERAL HEADQUARTERS DURING THE WAR .	129
A LUNCHEON-PARTY IN PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG’S HUNTING-BOX IN THE GRAMMERSBERG. THE PRESIDENT IS ON THE EXTREME RIGHT . . .	144
HINDENBURG WITH HIS FAMILY DURING THE WAR .	209
<i>From left to right: CAPTAIN VON PENTZ (son-in-law and personal adjutant), FRAU VON PENTZ (Hindenburg’s younger daughter), FRAU VON HINDENBURG, PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG, and FRAU BROCK- HUSEN (the General’s elder daughter).</i>	
PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG IN THE GROUNDS OF HIS PALACE	224
PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG WITH TWO OF HIS GRAND- DAUGHTERS	288

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY LIFE AND MILITARY TRAINING

TOWARDS the end of the eighteenth century, King Frederick William of Prussia was graciously pleased to sanction the union of the names and arms of the two old military families of von Beneckendorff and von Hindenburg. The Beneckendorffs had been famous soldiers for over seven centuries; the von Hindenburgs are first mentioned in history in the year 1208. The union of the two families was based in the eighteenth century on the marriage of Hans Joachim von Beneckendorff, a man of poor health, with Scholastica von Hindenburg, the daughter of a house, ancient and noble indeed, but threatened with extinction. Scholastica's only brother, Otto Friedrich von Hindenburg, a soldier, lived for twenty-five years without being called upon to face the real business of his profession. At the end of this time, he fought in the two Silesian wars, and had his leg shattered by a cannon ball, so that he was obliged to retire in 1579. The king, at whose side he had fought, rewarded him with the gift of two estates, Limbsee and Neudeck. It seems possible that Otto Friedrich von Hindenburg may have called to his house his sister's son, Christoph Wilhelm von Beneckendorff. The latter left the Prussian army with the rank of Captain, married Katherina Tugendreich von Brandt, heiress to two estates, and devoted himself to the management of the property. He and his brother, Johann Daniel, sold their shares in the estates of which they became possessed when their parents died. Johann Daniel remained without issue. The race of von Beneckendorff, after the sale of these estates in Neumark,

remained settled in Prussia. In 1747, Johann Otto Gottfried von Beneckendorff was born. He also adopted a military career, which, like his father, he early abandoned to devote himself to estate management. However, on the death of Margarethe von Hindenburg (sole heiress of her brother Otto Friedrich) who left everything to her sister's grandson, he gave up his former possessions, settled on the two properties of Limbsee and Neudeck, and accepted the condition that he should unite the name and arms of von Hindenburg with his own. He married Louisa von Eulenburg, daughter of a famous Prussian family, and had two sons by her. The elder, after a distinguished military career, died, without male heirs, in 1847. The second son, Otto Ludwig, born in 1778, also became an officer, but he soon tired of military life, and, with his wife Eleonore von Brederlow, took up his residence at Neudeck, which he acquired from his father in 1801. The property of Limbsee was sold in 1833, and Neudeck remained henceforth the true home of the von Hindenburgs. Otto Ludwig and his wife had fourteen children, who were brought up with the Spartan simplicity usual in the family of a Prussian officer, a simplicity which, in this case, was perhaps heightened to some extent by the terror of the Napoleonic Wars and the period of suffering which they brought to Germany. The youngest son of this numerous family, Robert, was born at Neudeck in 1816, and was destined to become a distinguished officer and the father of Paul von Beneckendorff and von Hindenburg, the second President of the German republic.

With fourteen children to bring up, it was plain that the estate of Neudeck could hardly afford great luxury to its

possessor. Albert, the fourth son, married the daughter and heiress of the owner of a neighbouring property, and devoted himself to agriculture. The army, however, for the sake of tradition was the career which the sons were expected to adopt. The youngest boy, Robert, at the age of sixteen, entered the 18th Regiment of Foot, in the year 1832. He was a sensitive youth, a little inclined to melancholy, and he cherished a deep devotion for his home and for the amenities of home life. He soon learned to love his profession and was known to be unusually capable and conscientious in the carrying out of his duties. In 1845, he married Luise Schwickart, daughter of a military surgeon, a man who bore a high reputation in Prussia and who had been awarded the Iron Cross for very distinguished conduct on the battle-field.

To Robert and Luise, on October the 2nd, 1847, their first son was born in the town of Posen. This boy, destined to become world-famous, and to be the just admiration of both friend and foe, was given the names Paul Ludwig Hans Anton. The shadow of war hung over him even in his infancy, for the Polish Rebellion of 1848 broke out in the year following his birth. The town of Posen, which, together with Danzig and certain other places, had been handed over to Prussia in the days of Catherine II of Russia, at the Second Partition of Poland, was left unguarded, the garrison having been sent into the field to suppress the rising. Mieroslawski* was able to enter the town. Hindenburg tells us, in his book of Memoirs,† that his mother, forced, as were all inhabitants of Posen, to

*Leader of the Polish Rebellion in Prussia.

†*Aus meinem Leben.*

illuminate her house in honour of the Polish leader, sat in a back room at the cradle of her little son, and comforted herself with the reflection that, in her heart, the lights in her front windows were burning in honour of the King of Prussia's birthday, which happened to fall upon that day. Microslawski's triumph was but a transient one, for the Prussians put down the rebellion with great rigour, and it was followed by trials and condemnations to death and imprisonment.

Robert and Luise von Hindenburg had three more children ; a son, Otto, just under two years younger than Paul, who died in 1908 ; a sister four years younger ; and a still younger brother, Bernhard, who has written a biography of von Hindenburg.

In the year 1850, Robert was appointed Company Commander in the Militia, and the little family removed from Posen to Pinne. Here they settled in a small house with a big garden, and the children passed their early years in a healthy country environment. In 1855, Robert was transferred to Glogau as Captain and Company Commander, and here Frau Schwickart, Paul's maternal grandmother, came to join her daughter and her family.

It was in Glogau that Paul went to school ; at first, to the little evangelical *Bürgerschule*, and later to the Royal *Gymnasium*,* which, however, he left in his second year to go to the Military Academy. On the first page of his *Aus meinem Leben*, Paul von Hindenburg says that "to become a soldier was not a decision for me—it went as a matter of course." So, a little, eleven years' old boy, "not without fears," passed through the iron gates of the Military

*Approximating to our Public Schools, save that there are no boarders.

School at Wahlstatt (in Silesia) and shamefacedly dashed away the unbidden tears that the parting with his father had brought into his eyes, knowing that it would never do so to disgrace the new cadet's jacket. There was nothing soft about the life of the Prussian Cadet Corps in the time of von Hindenburg's youth. Discipline was severe, the life, as he himself says, "consciously and purposely rough."

The boy seems to have been quite an ordinary sort of boy, with nothing in particular to distinguish him from his fellows or to point to the high destiny he was to fulfil. He appears to have conceived the highest admiration for certain of the masters in the Cadet School and to have thrown himself eagerly into the general life of the place. It is certain that the hard, healthy existence of this period counteracted the effects of a serious illness which Paul had suffered as a small boy and the further weakening effects of too rapid growth. In consequence of these physical drawbacks he was a little late in developing, and showed no special inclination to apply himself diligently to study. Little by little, however, his ambition awoke, and he finished his education bearing the reputation of an unusually gifted scholar.

As was generally the case with the Royal Cadets, a close and firm loyalty and love for the King and the royal household was rooted in von Hindenburg's heart; and, to him, a Cadets' Parade which took place in 1859 before Prince Frederick William (later the Emperor) and his wife was a great and exciting experience.

In 1863, having reached *Sekunda*,* von Hindenburg was transferred to Berlin, to the Cadet School in Neue Friedrich-

*The highest class but one, in a German school.

strasse. In 1864, the war against Denmark broke out and a letter written by him on May the 31st of that year serves to show very clearly what type of boy he had developed into, and that his stern upbringing in Wahlstatt had not hardened his nature or done anything but increase his lively affection for his parents and his home.

“Recently I got your welcome letter, or rather that of dear Papa, which to a certain extent quieted me. That you, dear Mama, should be so ill pains me deeply, but I hope you are better already and that we can look forward to a rapid convalescence. Only take good care of yourself and don’t overstrain yourself too early, in your care for others. Forgive that I permit myself to make regulations for you, but you surely know how worried I am about you. I already had a premonition that you were very ill, I dreamt about it all night, and thought about it in the daytime, without ever having had any news. God will certainly hear our prayer and keep and strengthen you. Last Wednesday was the Spring Parade down Unter den Linden ; as usual we came first and then looked on. Next day, His Majesty sent to tell us he was satisfied with our march past and to say how he and all the princes reckoned it as a high credit to us that the cadets entering the Army had hurried off at once to Schleswig* without waiting for their equipment. Three cadets took part in the charge still dressed in our uniform, one of them recently sent his things back. A non-commissioned officer† is wearing the jacket now, so that we have it

*To take part in the war with Denmark.

†Selected cadets held non-commissioned ranks over their comrades.

always before our eyes. Prince Carl told how, after the charge, he had asked a Bombardier if he felt tired, to which he answered, 'How can I be tired when our officers are so gallant and our young cadets lead the way for us so bravely?' The King has ordered that all this be written in our Archives."

Hindenburg made many friends as a cadet, giving these, and demanding from them, that absolute loyalty and sincerity which were characteristic of him.

In 1865, he had the honour of being appointed a page to the widowed Queen Elizabeth and thus had the opportunity of seeing something of the pomp of life at the Court. This service strengthened, if that were possible, his love for the Prussian royal house, and the gold watch which his mistress gave him accompanied him through three wars.

The war with Denmark of 1864 wrought up the Royal Cadets to a high pitch of excitement, and von Hindenburg and his other comrades who were still too young to go into the field, saw their more fortunate companions off with a wistful envy and accompanied their departure with the warmest of good wishes. Many of these were to live to see the darkest hour in the history of their country—but to von Hindenburg it was to be given to stand as the great representative of a completely changed Germany, a Germany bankrupt of all the royal pomp and military power with which his education had been identified.

Before leaving the Cadet Corps, von Hindenburg and other students of his year, were taken to the Palace and formally introduced to the King. Each boy had to say

his name and the rank of his father—some of the more nervous making a sorry business of this ceremonial. The King spoke a few serious words to these young, eager boys, and told them that they must always do their duty, no matter how hard it might seem.

In the spring of 1865, Paul von Hindenburg passed his final examination, acquitting himself with distinction; and in the spring of the following year he left the Cadet School, and on the 7th of April, 1866, at the age of eighteen and a half, he joined the 3rd Infantry Regiment of Guards.

With what deep affection and gratitude Paul von Hindenburg looked back upon his cadet years is revealed in a letter which he sent in the first year of the war to the Commandant of the Cadet School at Wahlstatt. He wrote then :

“If I have achieved much in my military career, I have always been conscious that the basis of my success is to be sought in my education in the Cadet Corps. If enthusiasm for my future calling and love for king and country had already been implanted in my child’s heart in the home of my parents, so, in the Cadet Corps, comradeship, self-control and discipline were inculcated into the growing boy and youth.

“It is no wonder that as a grey-haired man, I still think with a grateful heart of the years spent in the Cadet Corps, although the times then were certainly rougher than they are now. But those times formed character and created men who never lacked initiative or responsibility.

“I know that to-day’s milder ways of education—even though it be now and then, by other paths, lead to the

same result. Our brave young officers show that daily on the battle-fields. And so I wish each one of your cadets that he may look back upon his cadet years with as thankful a heart as I do, that he may be able to keep his heart young and fresh through all the storms of life, and that he may go as far as possible in his military career."

Hindenburg's father retired in 1863, with the rank of Major, and settled down to a quiet life at Neudeck, though he was destined to serve again, and before very long, in the Prussian Army.

CHAPTER TWO
CAMPAIGNS AGAINST AUSTRIA AND
FRANCE

THE 3rd Infantry Regiment of Guards, which von Hindenburg now joined, as he tells us in his *Aus meinem Leben*, had been re-established by reason of the increase of active military units in the years 1859-60. The new regiment had won honour in the war of 1864; and the Prussian soldier looked upon the honour of his regiment as upon his own personal honour; the two were one thing, to be jealously protected to the death. Hindenburg bears testimony to the fact that this pride of the soldiers for their regiment was a thing so strong that nothing could break it, not even the constant depletion of the ranks (as in such a war as the last) and re-building of them with fresh blood. The torch of honour passed from the hands of the dying men to their successors and was, in turn, held high by them until death forced them to relinquish it.

In the year in which Hindenburg entered his regiment as a lieutenant, the war with Austria broke out, and on the 28th of June, 1866, he went into action for the first time at Soor. His feelings on this occasion were described in a letter to his parents in which he says:—

“First, a certain pleasure that one is at last going to smell powder, but then a worried anxiety as to whether, as a young officer, one will be able to do one’s duty satisfactorily. Then, when one hears the first shots (which are always greeted with a cheer), one is gripped with a kind of enthusiasm; a short prayer, a thought for the loved ones at home—and forward!”

Hindenburg himself was not much engaged in this first battle, and was concerned only in a little sharp-shooting in a wood and the taking of a few prisoners. His company belonged to the reserve, which never reached the front of the battle. On the following day, however, he was made acquainted with the other side of the picture, and was sent out with sixty Grenadiers to look for and bury the dead. This duty was made all the more difficult because the grain had not been cut, and he had some difficulty in getting back to his company in the afternoon, by which time the whole division had started on its southward march.

The Prussian Army, which had marched into Bohemia in three divisions, united victoriously in the decisive battle of Königgrätz, and it was here that von Hindenburg had his first real taste of battle and gained his first honour, the *Rote Adlerorden* (Order of the Red Eagle) Fourth Class. As a young man he once said : “ My keenest wish would be to stand at the head of a regiment, and to lead it hurrahing against the foe ” ; and he added, after a pause, “ It would mean everything to me ! ” Here, at Königgrätz, he was to show that he was indeed a born soldier and a born leader of men. The Archives of the Regiment tell the story of the fight at the village of Rosberitz, in terse, soldier’s language :—

“ Grape-shot was suddenly fired at Lieutenant von Hindenburg’s rifle-men. A battery had been hurriedly brought along from Rosberitz and had opened fire on this Division at close quarters. After a short volley, Lieutenant von Hindenburg threw himself upon the gun. A grape-

shot grazed his head and, for a moment, he fell stunned. When he sprang to his feet again, he saw that three guns were already in the hands of his men, while two others were being got away in the direction of Wsestar. These two, which were caught in a narrow defile between Rosberitz and Sweti, were also captured by the fifth company."

That this young man was an ardent enthusiast and that he had not learned to know the miseries and horrors which war brings in its train can be seen from a letter written to his parents, about this time.

"For a soldier war is a normal circumstance, and in addition I am in God's hands. If I fall, that is the most honourable and most beautiful death ; a wound, also, can only be for the best ; and if I return unscathed—well, all the better."

Of his wound, he wrote to his parents :—

"A bullet passed through the eagle of my helmet, grazed my head, without wounding me severely and went out again behind the eagle. I fell down unconscious and my men surrounded me, thinking I was dead. Had it been half an inch deeper, the bullet would have entered my brain and I should have lain there cold and dead."

Hindenburg's father was also active in this war, as Knight of Honour of the Order of St. John. In caring for

wounded men in the hospitals, he came face to face with the darker side of fighting. Also, he was an older man, and it is small wonder that his letters to his wife bore striking contrast to those written by his son. Addressing Frau von Hindenburg, he wrote :—

“ Oh, God, what a rod of punishment in Thy hand is this torch of War ! Praised be Jesus Christ that He so graciously protects our beloved child and has not brought him to these rooms where pictures of misery meet one and where tears of agony have been shed so often and must long continue to flow.”

Königgrätz was a decisive victory, but it was a fierce and savage fight. At one point the Division with which von Hindenburg fought was obliged to retreat, which it was only able to accomplish under the cover provided by a burning thatched roof which fell from a house into the street, and prevented pursuit. The companies were soon brought into order again and supports approached from the rear. The Prussians then rapidly occupied the village which the enemy troops evacuated to join in the general rout of their whole army.

Much has been written to show that the Prussian officer has not much understanding with his men and that there is little bond of comradeship between them. In this connection, there is an interesting story about von Hindenburg. Many years later, when Hindenburg was appointed Field-Marshal, he received a letter from a veteran of Königgrätz, wishing him luck. A day or two later, the old soldier received a post card from the Field-Marshal, written in his own hand, with these words :—

“ Many thanks for your letter, which unfortunately I can answer only briefly, because of the many claims on my time. I am glad that you remember your leader at Königgrätz, and I still think often and with pleasure about those good times. May it go well with you in your life’s evening ! That is the wish of your regimental comrade.”

A money order came with the same post, bearing the message :—

“ Please spend this sum in drinking a toast to the health of our most gracious Kaiser and King and to our dear old regiment. With a comrade’s greetings. Von Hindenburg.”

When peace was made, the 3rd Regiment of Guards was garrisoned at Hanover where von Hindenburg’s Company Commander was a severe disciplinarian, a certain Captain von Seel, under whom he learnt to drill recruits.

The town of Hanover became so dear to Hindenburg that he settled there after his retirement. Many of the inhabitants were at first unfriendly disposed towards the Prussians, but von Hindenburg says that the loyalty of the Hanoverians towards their reigning house was never condemned by any of his comrades, although they were all impressed with the necessity of embodying Hanover with Prussia. The officers were soon received with pleasure by many of the townspeople, and von Hindenburg was very quick to respond to the *Gemüthlichkeit* which he felt around him. The beauty of the town and its environment made a strong

appeal and he was never dull in his spare hours, many of which he spent riding or walking in the surrounding woods.

In the summer of 1867, the King of Prussia visited Hanover for the first time, and von Hindenburg stood with the Guard of Honour before the Palace. The King stopped and asked the young man how he had won his decoration,* a circumstance which caused him much pride and pleasure.

The happy days of peace drew to an end, and war, "the normal condition for a soldier," once again broke out. Hindenburg, as Adjutant of the 1st Battalion, went into the field in 1870 under the command of Major von Seegenberg, who had fought also in the wars of 1864 and 1866.

Hindenburg's regiment marched for many days in the blazing heat and covered with dust, until it reached the battle-field of Vionville on August 17th. Here the men saw traces of the severity of the fight in which their 3rd and 10th Army Corps had been engaged. The march was resumed the next day and the Prussian regiment was joined by the 12th (Saxon) Corps; towards midday the troops reached Doncourt. On this short march, from Vionville to Doncourt, the men suffered acutely owing to an insufficient water supply. Hindenburg visited the grave of his cousin, who had fallen at Vionville, in the cemetery of Mars la Tour and rode over parts of the battle-field. In his *Aus meinem Leben*, he tells us that "rows, and, in places, even heaps of dead, French and Prussians intermingled . . . proved what a murderous conflict had been waged here and in the immediate neighbourhood."

*The Order of the Red Eagle.

The regiment, having reached Doncourt, was tired out, and there was little enthusiasm among the men, who were sorely in need of rest. It seemed to them that they had come upon the scene too late, and the gruelling march had been in vain. Suddenly, from the east, the thunder of guns was heard, a thunder which increased rapidly in volume. The 11th Army Corps had met the enemy. The march in a north-easterly direction was resumed, and their weariness immediately fell away from the soldiers. They were, after all, to face the French. Near Batilly, the order was given to unfurl the flags—an order which was greeted and obeyed with cheers. Batteries went galloping past the marching men, in the direction of the foe. “From minute to minute,” says Hindenburg, “the feeling rose higher that a really great battle was to be fought.” They could see great clouds of smoke, which hung on the hot, heavy air, arising from the gun emplacements. It was possible, at last, to make out more or less the positions of the French infantry and artillery, whose fire was murderously directed against the German 11th Army Corps, and it seemed as if their left wing was in danger of being overwhelmed by the French.

Hindenburg’s regiment, avoiding, for the present, a frontal attack, advanced by a small, grass-grown declivity, northwards upon St. Marie sur Chênes. The village was attacked and occupied, and Hindenburg’s division marched southwards towards St. Privat. A short rest followed—a strange sort of rest, with stray bullets from St. Privat bringing death and wounds to the German soldiers, who were in mass formation.

Hindenburg rode to Roncourt to reconnoitre, and found

that village free from soldiers, but he saw French infantry in the quarries which lay to the east. The Saxons had not arrived. He returned to his men and led two companies to Roncourt, just in time to meet and repulse an attack from the quarries by the French. Covered by the action of these two Companies, the others were able to advance upon St. Privat, and Hindenburg and his men followed when, later, the village of Roncourt was occupied by a part of the 12th Army Corps. At St. Privat the fight was terrible. The field of battle was broad and without cover and a devastating infantry fire from the French sought to annihilate the advancing German troops. The French remained in St. Privat, which was easy to defend owing to its protective, sloping approach. At last came a lull in the fighting, for both sides were exhausted. Reinforcements (the 2nd Brigade of Guards) came up from St. Marie and the Saxons drew in from the north-west. The sorely-tried infantry, which had stood the brunt of the battle, drew fresh courage from the timely arrival of these supports. They stood up once more in the glow of the sunset and made an heroic, irresistible attack upon the village. As darkness fell, the French ranks broke in defeat—St. Privat was won, but at heavy cost. The 3rd Regiment of Guards had lost 36 officers and 1,060 non-commissioned ranks and men, of which 17 officers and 304 other ranks had been killed. Other Guards infantry regiments had suffered as severely. There was little time to reflect upon these losses; the dead were buried on the 19th of August, and the regiment marched westwards on the 20th. On the way, the Divisional Leader, Lieut.-General von Pape, spoke to the men, and praised them for their gallant conduct on the field.

“Further, the old soldiers’ saying holds good for us :— If there be thousands to the left, or thousands to the right, if all our friends fall, we will fight on.”*

The Guards regiments drew up finally on the hills east of Gironne and watched from thence the Battle of Sedan, in which, owing to their terrible losses, they were not permitted to take part. From the hills they saw how the French were surrounded, how they made valiant and repeated efforts to break through the circle that was rapidly closing in on them and how utter a defeat they had to suffer. Hindenburg joined in the singing of “*Nun danket alle Gott*,” and took part in the general rejoicings, for every one thought that the war was over. In this, however, they were mistaken.

On the 2nd of September, the Crown Prince of Prussia visited the troops, and the King came to them later in the day. He was received with unparalleled delight and the men were not to be kept in rank. Hindenburg says they surrounded the monarch and kissed his hands and feet, while he thanked them with tears in his eyes for what they had done at St. Privat. Bismarck rode in the train of the King, and received a special cheer.

On September the 3rd, Hindenburg’s regiment was ordered to round up all Frenchmen who were outside Sedan, and drive them into the fortress. There were, however, so few of these that it was unnecessary for the regiment to do anything ; a few patrols sufficed for the work. As Hindenburg turned back to make this announcement to a following regiment, he saw a cloud of dust on the

**Aus meinem Leben.*

road leading north. A French doctor told him that this cloud hid the Emperor Napoleon with his guard of Black Hussars on his way to captivity.*

On the same evening, the regiments started the march to Paris, and on September 19th, from the high ground about six miles north-east of St. Denis, they sighted the French capital. It was a clear autumn day, and the city looked eminently beautiful under the sunlight. Hindenburg wrote in his memoirs :†

“I believe that the Crusaders must have looked upon Jerusalem with like feelings to those with which we beheld Paris lying at our feet.”

And Paris, like Jerusalem, was to fall.

The regiment was quartered at Gonesse, where, more than half a century earlier, Blücher and Wellington had met to discuss tactics.

For months the German forces were encamped outside Paris, the monotony of existence being broken only occasionally by sallies from the city on the part of the French.

For the next few months the States of the North German Union were engaged in negotiations with the Southern States. Every one had hoped, in consequence of the victory over the French, that these would gladly unite with the Northern Union to form one great country. But there were many difficulties to overcome. Discussions between

*Napoleon, taken prisoner at Sedan, was sent by the King of Prussia to the Castle of Wilhelmshöhe, near Kassel.

† *Aus meinem Leben.*

the appropriate statesmen were opened at Munich in September but were broken off. They were resumed in October at Versailles. At last, on November the 15th, agreements were signed with Baden and Hesse. Bavaria and Württemberg made much trouble, but they, too, on the 23rd and 25th of November, respectively, gave their signatures. Germany was united, at last, and the monarch was now German Kaiser and King of Prussia; and the new German Empire came into being.

So the month of January, 1871, brought Hindenburg one of the great experiences of his life, for he was ordered to Versailles to represent his regiment at the Proclamation of the King of Prussia as German Emperor. He was deeply impressed by the occasion, and in his memoirs he pays tribute to the grace lent to it by the dignified bearing of the King. He also remarks that the South Germans threw themselves with more vigorous rejoicing into the ceremony than did the Prussians, who, although feeling the greatness of the occasion just as strongly, acted with greater reserve. Even to this day, the difference in temperament between north and south Germans is very marked. The Prussians resemble the English, but the southerners, and more especially the Rhineland people, are enthusiastic, easily moved to laughter and tears.

Thus was the German Empire proclaimed in a foreign country and in time of war, and it was to fall a bare half century later at the end of another and far more terrible war. In the evening, the new Kaiser gave a banquet to the Generals who had attended the ceremony; whilst the junior officers dined as his guests in the Hotel de France. And there was nothing, even then, to set Hindenburg out

as a man apart from the other distinguished young men among whom he sat; no shadow of foreboding disturbed the warm loyalty he felt towards the King. He could not know that the little Prince Wilhelm, who eagerly followed the course of the war at home in Germany, would be the last of the German Kaisers and would live to see his erstwhile Field-Marshal recognized as the paramount figure of the country. But many years were to pass before this change took place.

On January the 19th, the day after the Proclamation, the sound of artillery called the guests from the picture-gallery of Versailles back to their posts. The French were making their last brave effort—the sally of Mont Valerien, under Trochu, and the capitulation of Paris followed on the 26th, and the cessation of hostilities on the 28th. After the surrender of Paris, Hindenburg's Brigade moved into pleasant quarters opposite the city on the banks of the Seine, in the neighbourhood of Pont de Neuilly.

Hindenburg, Prussian to the depths of his being, was nevertheless undistinguished by the suspicion towards foreigners that unfortunately characterizes so many of his countrymen. Young as he was, he was deeply impressed by the valiant spirit shown by the French, though later he was to deplore the conduct of some towards prisoners in the Great War. He found something very magnificent in the endurance shown by a people, naturally emotional and ardent, in this war. He took the opportunity to ride through Paris and to observe not only the architecture and the monuments, but also the attitude of the French.

On March the 3rd, the Corps of Guards paraded before

the Kaiser at Longchamps. The spirit of patriotism for the *Vaterland* and veneration for the House of Hohenzollern ran high in the ranks of these Prussian soldiers. This was, perhaps, the "militarism" which later was to become so detested, both by the Germans themselves and by their enemies. It was at least founded upon a feeling which every Englishman should be able to understand—love for King and country. The tragedy was that this fresh, spontaneous feeling later became simply a fetish which was drilled not only into the Army but into the civil population by means of a cast-iron discipline. The birthday of the Kaiser on March 22nd, celebrated by the Army before Paris, supplied the occasion for another demonstration of loyalty and affection on the part of the troops.

Although the Peace preliminaries had been ratified on March the 2nd, and, on the 3rd, a part of the German Army had begun its homeward journey, and although the Kaiser left Versailles on the 7th, von Hindenburg remained with the Occupation Army and was a witness of some of the disturbances which broke out in the French capital. The Communists, who led the riots against the Government, had no very hard task to inflame a defeated people against its rulers. Fires, plunder and murder were conducted wholesale, and a sad procession of fugitives from the city kept the German troops informed about the situation. Hindenburg says* that on May the 23rd he received the impression that the whole of Paris was falling into destruction. He gives also a rather grimly amusing instance of that enterprise in which commercially-minded men display

* *Aus meinem Leben.*

their ability to turn any set of circumstances to their own advantage. Certain of these gentlemen erected telescopes on the hills to the north-west of Paris, which they hired to the German soldiers that they might watch the progress of the Civil War. Finally, from a high window in St. Denis, Hindenburg (who scorned the telescopes) was able to see the end of the Communists for the time being. The Government's troops stormed Montmartre and swept away the last defences of the rebels.

At the beginning of June, Hindenburg returned with his regiment to Berlin, and, on the 16th of that month, the citizens of the festively decorated and beflagged capital were able to cheer the triumphal entry of the Kaiser and his victorious Army. In the procession rode a young Guards officer wearing the Iron Cross he had won at St. Privat.

CHAPTER THREE

A BRILLIANT MILITARY CAREER

AFTER the war, Hindenburg was able to spend some little time of rest and recuperation in his home at Neudeck. His parents, deeply grateful to have him safely back again, could not do enough to render his vacation as enjoyable as possible. His regiment was again stationed at Hanover, where he rejoined it after his visit to Neudeck. He remained here in service for the next few years, but then followed his desire to learn something of higher military education and prepared himself for entrance into the *Kriegsakademie* (War Academy) to which he was admitted in 1873.

Hindenburg's first year at the *Kriegsakademie* caused him some disappointment. He had little patience with any study of which he could not see the immediate practical value. He regards, even at the present day, a close study of classical antiquity as nothing but a waste of time for a man who has his living to make. Similarly, in those early days of his life, he abhorred having to direct his attention to ancient history and former tactics, which, with the changed methods of warfare, could not be applied to war as he knew it. He was also obliged to attend lectures in advanced mathematics and he wrote later* that only a few of the students who attended these classes found any use for their learning in practice. The two following years of study, however, brought Hindenburg much satisfaction. His teachers were men of mark and knew how to interest their classes. Tactics was his favourite study, and one of his professors, Lt.-Col. Pochhammer, once wrote :—

* *Aus meinem Leben.*

“Hindenburg always had some section of the General Staff’s map before him, upon which he began to work quietly when the lecturer could not manage to interest him.”

Years later, Hindenburg wrote to Pochhammer, thanking him for what he owed him, and adding, “If I now and then turned away from the art of fortification to devote myself to tactics, you must kindly excuse it, because I have always adhered to the principle: *At the most important point, one cannot be too strong.* But I hope that the history of the war* will show that the art of fortification has often and faithfully served me, where it was necessary.”

The three years spent at the *Kriegsakademie* slipped quickly away, and Hindenburg was ordered to the Chief General Staff in the spring of 1877, and soon afterwards, in 1878 he was appointed Second Officer of the General Staff to the 2nd Army Corps at Stettin. At this time Field-Marshal Graf Moltke was the Chief of the General Staff of the German Army, and he exercised an enormous personal influence not only upon those officers immediately attached to his own staff, but upon every officer in the whole of the General Staff. Those who held appointments on the General Staff were the very pick and flower of the Army. It was not possible for a young officer to enter the *Kriegsakademie* unless he had acquitted himself with honour in his regiment and could produce a strong recommendation from his colonel. In his memoirs Hindenburg speaks with great admiration both of the General Staff and of the system from which it was evolved.

*1914-1918.

"I believe," he writes, finally, "that the German General Staff as a whole understood the carrying out of its difficult task. Its performances until the end were masterly, even if a few faults and errors may have occurred. I could think of no more honourable testimony for its abilities than that the foe, as one of the conditions for peace, demanded its dissolution."

Hindenburg, with his interest in tactics and his great powers of administration, was eminently fitted to be a member of this important organization; although, at first, he was to be a little disappointed with the duties allotted to him. He tells us that in addition to the higher work of the General Staff, its officers were also entrusted with the execution of a number of small matters of detail. As he was the youngest Staff Officer, his time was mostly occupied with the latter, which proved to be irksome only until realization came to him that this work was necessary for the welfare of the troops and even necessary to the proper realization of the plans and ideas of his superiors. This work also supplied the basis of that intimate knowledge of military technique and needs which was later to stand him in such good stead.

Hindenburg had always loved his home with an intensity which was probably increased by the fact that he had been obliged to leave it at so early an age; and it was not surprising, therefore, that his thoughts turned to marriage that he might recreate the atmosphere of his parents' house that he had grown to venerate. On September the 24th, 1879, von Hindenburg married Gertrud Wilhelmine von Sperling, thirteen years his junior, and daughter of a

distinguished soldier, Major-General von Sperling, who was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the 1st Army after the outbreak of the war of 1870, but who died shortly after the cessation of hostilities. The marriage was ideally happy, and husband and wife were united in the closest mental and spiritual affinity. Their first child, a daughter, was born in 1880, and the small family was later increased by the addition of a son and of another daughter.

In 1881, Hindenburg was transferred to Königsberg to the 1st Division, where he held an independent post on the General Staff. Here he was at first under the leadership of Lieut.-General Nachtigall and later under General von Verdy du Vernois, who was afterwards Minister for War. Hindenburg was glad that he had been sent back to his own province; and the fact that he felt himself at home gave an additional impetus to his work. It was here, largely influenced by his brilliant superior, von Verdy, that Hindenburg extensively studied the questions relating to the defence of Germany from the east. Verdy, because he had been assigned to the Headquarters of the Russian Command during the Polish rising of 1863, was well informed regarding the political circumstances of Germany's eastern frontier, and, in addition to this, he had an extraordinary knowledge of warfare. The period during which Hindenburg was in close connection with this man was one of inestimable value to him, and he was to prove many years later, on the field of Tannenberg, how much he had profited by it. He remained at Königsberg for three years, and it was here that his only son was born in 1883.

In 1884, Hindenburg was again transferred, this time to frontier service with the 58th Infantry Regiment garrisoned

at Fraustadt. Here he was in command of a company composed almost entirely of Poles. As the men, for the most part, knew little or no German and the officers could not speak Polish, this was a peculiarly difficult situation. Hindenburg, in his childhood, had picked up only a smattering of Polish, but, nevertheless, he formed a fairly good opinion of the men in his company. He found them industrious and willing to do their best, and he also found gratitude and affection among them when they realized that their superiors were trying to smooth their path so far as possible. Hindenburg did not consider the cases of petty thieving and drunkenness which were regrettably frequent amongst the Poles as being so much due to moral laxity as to improper upbringing and education. In this connection, it must be remembered that Hindenburg, with his unusually broad outlook, was probably better served by the Poles than other officers were; for, owing to the practical impossibility of officers and men understanding each other, there occurred certain injustices towards the Poles in the Army, which they bitterly resented. Years later, when Hindenburg was Commanding General of an Army Corps, there occurred an incident with a Polish soldier which is well worth recording. The General, when on duty, was always to the point and severe, and never permitted himself a joke or a smile, and, on this occasion, he was inspecting the manœuvres of an Infantry regiment. The Captain of the 6th Company was worried, because the most stupid man in the regiment was amongst his charges. Being anxious to avoid trouble, he agreed with the Sergeant-Major to place the man—a Pole—at an outpost as far away as possible, in the hope that the General would find no reason to speak to

him. The Sergeant-Major accompanied the man to the post and drilled him as to what he should answer if anyone should happen to speak to him. A wrong answer would cost him three days' arrest. The Company Commander, determined to avoid mishap, sent the Sergeant-Major cycling over to the post from time to time to see that the soldier had not forgotten his part. The inspection drew to a close when Hindenburg suddenly picked up a map and asked if all approaches were properly guarded against the foe, demanding finally :—" And hasn't this little track been forgotten ? " " No," said the Colonel, " Outpost No. 7 is there." Hindenburg glanced in the direction indicated, and then said, " Something seems to be out of order there. A soldier is riding about on a bicycle." Field-glasses were levelled, and the Sergeant-Major was seen cycling peacefully towards the outpost. Hindenburg entered his car and gave the order to drive to Outpost No. 7. The unhappy soldier was driven speechless with horror when he found himself the centre of a number of officers. " Now, my son, what are you doing here all alone ? " said Hindenburg cheerfully, and, no answer being forthcoming, he added, " Well, well, if your General speaks to you, you must answer him. Or did you think, perhaps, that I should not come over here ? " On hearing these words a broad grin spread over the Pole's face, and, in his queer dialect and using the familiar *Du*, he answered :—" So that's what Generals look like ? The Sergeant-Major has already asked about you twice ! He is sitting behind there in the corn-field ! " There are occasions when even the sternest General must laugh—and this was one of them.

The time at Fraustadt passed very pleasantly. Hinden-

burg was delighted to be in close touch again with regimental duties and he found agreeable friends and acquaintances amongst the landed proprietors of the neighbouring country. The intimate life of the little country town appealed to him greatly, and he did his best to learn to know something about each one of his soldiers. For these reasons, in spite of the material advantages of returning to the General Staff, it was with deep regret that he left Fraustadt in the summer of 1885 for Berlin. Here he became Tactics Instructor at the *Kriegsakademie* and was promoted Major, after a few months. On the General Staff, Major von Hindenburg was placed in the Departments of Colonel Graf von Schlieffen and of Colonel Vogel von Falckenstein, the two most important Departmental Chiefs of their time. Here, for over a year, he was engaged in the planning and discussing of active service arrangements. In 1886, in the spring, active tests were made of the arrangements in which Prince Wilhelm of Prussia* took part. It was the first meeting between the future War Lord and his Field-Marshal. In the winter following, the Prince was again present at a Sham Fight on which occasion Hindenburg was in command of the "Russian" Army.

Although at the time when Hindenburg was in Berlin, Field-Marshal von Moltke left immediate contact with the different departments of the General Staff in the hands of his assistants, Hindenburg, who had an immeasurable admiration for Moltke, states that his genius was still everywhere to be felt. "... Graf Moltke enjoyed a unanimous, boundless veneration, and none of us could hold himself aloof from his influence." In private life,

*Afterwards Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Hindenburg sometimes came in contact with the great man, but very rarely did so on matters of duty. Although Moltke was an amiable and willing conversationalist and had a pleasant gift of humour, his public speeches were of the shortest,* and Hindenburg has a good story to tell in this connection. On the Kaiser's birthday, the Generals and Staff Officers were the guests of von Moltke, and one of the officers offered to bet that Moltke's proposal of the toast to the Kaiser would not be more than ten words, including the speech and the *Hoch*. The wager was accepted, and the Field-Marshal duly arose and said : "*Meine Herrn, der Kaiser hoch !*" The winner wished to renew the wager next year, but the loser had had enough. This time, however, he would have won, for on this occasion von Moltke used eleven words to propose the toast. In the year 1891 Hindenburg saw Moltke for the last time, as he lay dead. In paying tribute to one of the most remarkable figures in the history of Germany, Hindenburg writes :

"The departed lay on his bier without the usual wig, so that the wonderful shape of his head was revealed. Only a wreath of laurels was required to complete the picture of an ideal Cæsar's head. How many mighty thoughts had been born in this brain ; what high ideals had there held sway, and what noble sentiments had selflessly worked from thence for the good of our Fatherland and its monarch. Since then, I am convinced our country has not produced one personality as great in soul and char-

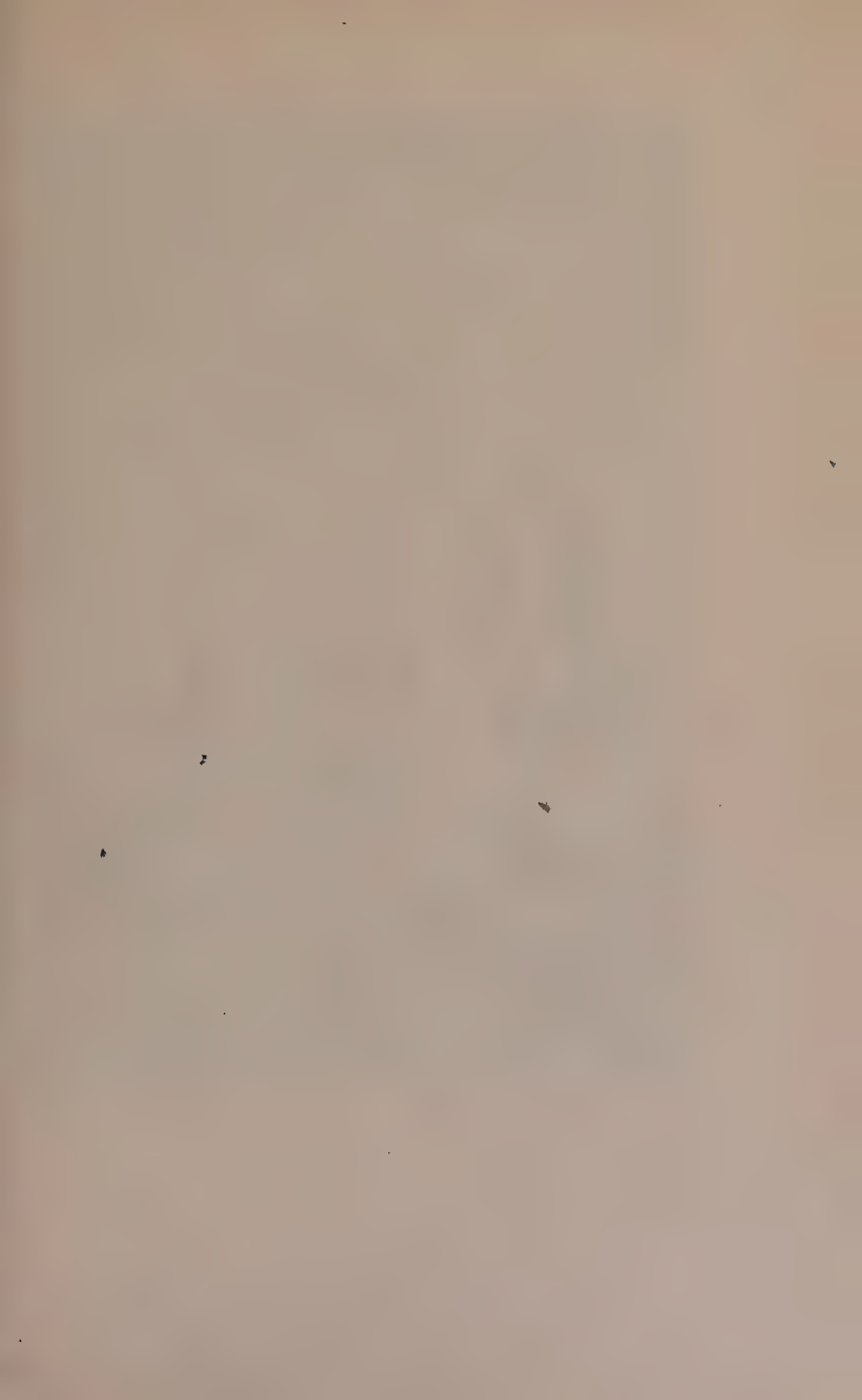
*Moltke was commonly called "*Moltke der Schweiger*" (Moltke the Silent) because of the brevity of his public speeches.

acter—perhaps, indeed, Moltke was of unique greatness in his union of these two characteristics.”

Three years before the death of Moltke, Hindenburg had sadly stood with the Guard of Honour that watched over the dead body of the first Kaiser, under the high grey walls of the cathedral. Hindenburg still treasures a grey marble block cut out of the floor of the cathedral on the spot where the Emperor's coffin had rested. The old emperor was very shortly followed to the grave by his son, the Kaiser Friedrich, who died before his time of a malignant tumour in the throat. At this time the General Staff was on a journey of inspection in the eastern part of Prussia, and it therefore happened that Hindenburg swore his oath of fidelity “on a spot where he was destined to prove it twenty-six years later.”

Hindenburg carried out his duties as Instructor of Tactics in the *Kriegsakademie* for five years, combining them with much other heavy work. He was sometimes so busy that twenty-four hours seemed an insufficient span for each day's work. As an instructor he followed the methods he had earlier acquired from von Verdy, and his pupils included many gifted young officers, among them two Turks (Shakir Bey and Tewfyk Effadi) who later had distinguished military careers in their own country. At this time, Hindenburg was made Chief General Staff Officer of the 3rd Army Corps where his chief was the younger General von Bronsart, who later became Minister for War, a post which had also been held by his elder brother.

In 1889 came another change, for General Verdy du





L.N.A.

HINDENBURG AS CADET IN 1866.

Vernois became Minister for War and determined to bring his much valued junior into the Ministry. Hindenburg was placed in charge of a section of the General War Department. Here he learnt the "office-work" side of soldiering, but it was unlikely that a man of his type—who so greatly preferred active regimental life to all other forms of existence—would devote himself with any pleasure to work carried out in an atmosphere of bureaucracy. Even, however, in the War Ministry he was able to find satisfaction in the carrying out of his job, and he conceived a great admiration for the way in which the various clerks and subordinates did their work. He, himself, had an enormous capacity for work, and the virtues of industry and efficiency always pleased him wherever he found them. The year 1893 brought him release, however, from a situation which was really trying to him, and returned him to his beloved soldiers, for he was given the command of the 91st Infantry Regiment in Oldenburg. He was later to acknowledge the value to himself of the time spent in the Ministry, but it was with unfeigned joy that he welcomed his new appointment and his return to a regiment. He writes* that

“ The post of Commander of a Regiment is the best in the Army. The Commander impresses his stamp upon the Regiment, upon the bearers of the tradition of the Army. His important tasks are the education of the officers, not only from a service but from a social point of view, and the training and guiding of the troops. I endeavoured to implant a sense of chivalry among my officers, and strict discipline in my Battalions, and to encourage everywhere a

**Aus meinem Leben.*

quick grasp of duties, a pleasure in their carrying-out and a lively independence. The circumstance that the garrison consisted of Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery, gave me the opportunity to organize numberless practices with mixed arms."

Hindenburg liked the town of Oldenburg and its inhabitants who went so quickly and peacefully about their business, although a private sorrow, the death of his mother, in August, 1893, clouded the first part of his residence there. He was very fond of his regiment, and he won the esteem and affection of the men. His great severity never set up barriers between him and his subordinates, for they knew that it proceeded only from a desire to do the best he could for the honour of his regiment, a matter which lay as near to them as it did to him.

The 18th of February, 1896, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the German Empire at Versailles, was the occasion of many great festivities throughout the country. At Oldenburg, however, owing to the serious illness of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, there could be no noisy rejoicings, though the Army celebrated the occasion in a fitting manner, and Hindenburg delivered the speech of the day.

"The new German Empire," he said, "arose amid the thunder of guns. And soldiers' courage and soldiers' faith shall also protect and defend it, should any dare to lay hands upon this precious jewel, for which streams of soldiers' blood has been shed."

The following year Colonel von Hindenburg stepped

into the barrack square for the last time, to say good-bye to the regiment. Addressing the men on this occasion, he said :

“ Musketeers ! I am here to bid you farewell. I shall always look back with pleasure and pride upon the splendid time during which I have had the honour of standing at the head of the regiment ; because, with a few exceptions, you have proved yourselves to be good, honourable soldiers. Take this spirit of faith and obedience with you into your homes, and it will go well with each one of you. That is your old commander’s wish to all of you. But, above all, I wish that the regiment should preserve its old renown as well in peace as—if God should will—in the face of the foe. Should I meet the regiment again in later time, it will always rejoice me. And now, as I linger among you for the last time, let us unite again in the cheer which we gave together when I took over the command of the regiment more than three years ago.” ,

The cheer for the Kaiser and the Grand Duke followed, and Hindenburg, after shaking hands with the Sergeant-Major, turned again to the waiting men and called : “ Adieu, Musketeers ! ” Then he left the barrack square with their answering “ Adieu ” ringing in his ears.

In 1896, after leaving Oldenburg, a complete change of environment awaited Hindenburg, for he became Chief of the General Staff of the 8th Army Corps at Coblenz. It was the first time he was brought in touch with the people of the Rhineland. It must here be mentioned that the

latter are almost as different from Prussians as chalk is from cheese. The Rhinelander understands how to be *gemütlich* better than does any other German. He lives in a land of sun and vineyards and, although he tills his fields and his wife bakes and scours with as much vigour as any other *Hausfrau*, it must be understood that he does not possess that enormous industry and iron sense of discipline that is so deeply rooted in the character of every true Prussian. Hindenburg, though in every sense a true Prussian, nevertheless fully understood the necessity of relaxation and that a certain amount of leisure to be devoted to the enjoyment of life was a matter of importance. In Hindenburg's young days outdoor games and sports, as they have so long been understood and practised in England, were almost unknown in Germany. The present enthusiasm for sport is entirely a post-war development, and there can be little doubt that it is greatly improving the spirit of present-day German youth. Hindenburg, however, rode and shot and was no damper of any kind of pleasure. The men of the Rhine country did not therefore find him unsympathetic; indeed, he was captivated by their joyful way of living and spent very many happy hours on the shores of the lovely river. His Commanding General here was at first General Vogel von Falckenstein, who had been his Departmental Chief in the Ministry for War, but, shortly after Hindenburg's appointment to the 4th Army Corps, he was replaced by the heir to the Grand Duke of Baden. Hindenburg speaks of the three and a half years which he spent working at the side of this man, as among the happiest of his life. His chief, who united great ability and devotion to duty with unusual charm of manner and with a sympathy which

endeared him to every one, became Hindenburg's close friend. Again, however, he was due for transfer, and in 1900 he was appointed Commander of the 28th Division at Karlsruhe. Here he and his wife were warmly received and made much of by the Grand Duke and Duchess of Baden, whose court was at Karlsruhe.

In the 28th Division, Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery were united under one command, and the Divisional Commander was therefore in a position to acquire a detailed as well as a general view of the employment of those strengths in war. One or two stories have been told of the tests which Hindenburg applied to the soldiers in order to see whether they were really awake to the importance of details. Amongst other matters upon which he laid great stress was the question of ability to recognize the rank of an officer by his badges. The non-commissioned officers, therefore, taught all the recruits the meaning of the different signs, and the new men were also usually told of Hindenburg's enormous moustache that they might more easily recognize him. A day of inspection came and Hindenburg appeared. The inspection over, as usual, he started to put questions. Addressing an honest Pomeranian, he said: "Now, my son, how, for example, would you recognize the Commander of your Division?" To the astonished horror of all the officers, the young man replied without hesitation: "*Am Schnautz!*"* On another occasion, Hindenburg, who was painfully exact and punctual, asked a recruit what the length of a period of ten minutes was. "Why, ten minutes!" replied the boy. Hindenburg, however, wished to make a test, took his watch from his pocket, and said:

*By his moustache!

"Now I shall look at my watch, and you must tell me when you think the ten minutes have passed." The recruit stood at attention, and, at the end of five minutes, Hindenburg asked whether ten had gone by. "No," said the recruit. But, when precisely ten minutes were over, the soldier shouted "Halt!" and the much-feared Divisional Commander was full of praise for this clever young man. Finally, he asked him how he was able to judge time with such accuracy. Pat came the reply: "By the tower clock over there!"

This period spent at Karlsruhe served to strengthen Hindenburg's understanding of the south German temperament. He found the people of Baden genial and kindly, and his connection with them was of the pleasantest. The Grand Duke and Duchess offered him constant hospitality, doubtless pleased to entertain the General who for so long had served with their son and had stood so high in his regard.

But the Karlsruhe days were not to pass without sorrow, for in 1902, nine years after the death of his wife, von Hindenburg's father followed her to the grave, at the mature age of eighty-six. He was buried in the black cloak of the Order of St. John, under the shadow of a lime tree in the cemetery at Neudeck. He had lived just long enough to see his son promoted Lieutenant-General.

Hindenburg left Karlsruhe and his division in 1903 to take over the command of the 4th Army Corps, at Magdeburg. He accepted with joy the heavy responsibilities involved in such a command. He delighted to pick out and reform the weak spots that came under his notice, to make each man feel that he was a round peg in a round

hole, and he exercised a boundless influence over the young officers attached to his staff. When reproof was necessary he never indulged in cheap sarcasm, but stated his displeasure in a few short sentences which impressed the culprit but did not make him feel hurt or sullen. In his senior cadet days, when occasion had arisen for him to point out to a junior the error of his ways, he had frequently concluded his remarks with the observation: "Remember—" "you want to become an officer!" To be an officer, so far as Hindenburg was concerned, meant to be a man who did his job efficiently, quietly, and with a definite enthusiasm for the task in hand. His own thoroughness was a by-word, and in the face of his tireless example it was not possible for a young officer under his command to do anything but his best.

Magdeburg, where Hindenburg was now quartered, is not an especially interesting town, though it has its "old part" and its fine cathedral. It is not an especially beautiful town, but carefully planted and large parks supply, to some extent, the deficiency of nature. Hindenburg, who had the happy gift of being able to adapt himself to any society, soon felt at home there. It is worthy of mention that a foundation for the support of veterans of 1870 existed in the town and, yearly, on the Kaiser's birthday, the donations to the fund were distributed to the old soldiers, and this was also always the occasion of a little celebration. Hindenburg, in consequence of his manifold duties, was in the ordinary way somewhat inaccessible and the Chairman of the foundation once sent a message to know when he could speak to him. "When it is the case of the old veterans, you can come and see me at any time."

was the reply, "and you need not rig yourself up for the occasion—just come along as you are."

At Magdeburg, he came in touch with all circles of the province, and he was quick to recognize worth and merit wherever he encountered it, for he was never guilty of that narrowness (common among the pre-war German officers) which was blind to the value of any calling other than that of a soldier. He did not indulge in snobbery and patronage, and he welcomed many types of people as guests in his house.

The immediate world around Hindenburg saw only a soldier who understood his duty and pursued it relentlessly, but his friends and guests were allowed to see something of the intimate life of his family. Some of its charm is revealed in the following letters written to his son.

"MY DEAR BOY,

M., 31.1.05.

"To-day my thoughts, wishes and prayers are much with you, the more so as you are, unfortunately, ill. Take good care of yourself and come here as soon as you can, so that we can nurse you up and you can improve your health and convalesce. In any case, take a closed carriage from the Barracks to the Potsdam station, so that you don't catch cold. I suppose you will let us know the day and hour of your arrival either by letter or telegraphically.

"But it has pleased me very much that you remained at your post to the last, and that you duly paraded your recruits. That is how a Prussian officer must behave.

"Now, for to-day, God bless you, my dear child. May we meet soon!

"With fond love,

"YOUR OLD FATHER."

"MY DEAR CHILD,

"Our thoughts and best wishes are with you to-day, my old boy. God bless you! Only do be very careful and come to us as soon as possible. Your mother's greeting from the store-cupboard will probably be too much for you to deal with yourself—perhaps your comrades will help you along.

"With truest love,

"YOUR MOTHER."

Magdeburg, 2.4.09.

"MY DEAR SON,

"I am delighted that you are to be made Adjutant. I know that you will prove worthy of the trust thus placed in you, and then this time will have its influence on your whole military future. The post of adjutant demands not only industry, thoroughness and reliability in the saddle and at the writing-desk, but, what is just as important, a proper tact. One is not there to put oneself on a high horse so far as the troop is concerned, but to ease its existence, and to form a connecting member between it and the Commander. And, so far as the latter is concerned one must always remember that he is the superior, and that he is a much older and more practical soldier. One has to apply his decisions and not to try and force one's own upon him. If he now and then permits suggestions owing to a trust in you, which must first be won, these must always be made in the most modest manner; and the troop must never be allowed to think that the adjutant 'does the job.' If that should

happen, the adjutant is no good. . . . I am glad your new horse pleases you. . . .

“YOUR OLD FATHER.”

“All good wishes, my dear child. I am so sorry that you cannot come to us for Maundy Thursday and go with us to Holy Communion. Last year you couldn't either—or we could not because of Ann's illness—but if it is at all possible, go to Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday with some of your comrades, that is, if you should not after all manage to come to us. A thousand good wishes, my child, from your

“MOTHER.”

“Magdeburg, 29.I.II.

“MY DEAR BOY : The best of all good wishes for your birthday. Remain well content, true to duty and taking pleasure in its fulfilment, and continue to bring your name credit and your parents pleasure. I should be very glad if your wish to go to the *Akademie* could be fulfilled. In that case you would certainly be sent to the Artillery or Cavalry at Hanover in the summer; that would be very nice. Get thoroughly down to work through February and then come here for a few days at the beginning of March after the examination. We expect to leave Magdeburg some time after the 20th of March.

“Write soon, my dear boy; we always long to hear from you. . . .

“YOUR OLD FATHER.”

While at Magdeburg, Hindenburg spent much of his

leisure shooting. There were plenty of hares and pheasant coverts in Saxony, and the owners of neighbouring estates preserved deer and all kinds of other game.

But Hindenburg was nearly sixty-five years old and, as he writes in his memoirs :*

“ . . . Little by little the decision grew in me to retire from the Army. I had attained far more in my military career than I had ever dared to hope. There was no prospect of war, and so I recognized it was my duty to clear the way for the advancement of younger men, and I asked in 1911 for permission to resign. As this unimportant circumstance has given rise to many legends, I wish to state emphatically that this step was not occasioned by any friction, either from a service or from a personal point of view.”

The parting from the 4th Army Corps was very hard, but “ it had to be ” ; and the town of Hanover, where he had been so happy in his young days, was the place to which he elected to retire.

Hindenburg concerned himself little with politics, but his ideas are expressed in his memoirs.

“ A firmly self-contained state, according to Bismarck’s conception, was the world in which I felt best. Discipline and work within the Fatherland meant more to me than any cosmopolitan dreams. Also I recognized no right for any citizen over against which a duty of equal weight could not be placed.”

** Aus meinem Leben.*

For Hindenburg, the whole round world was bound not with chains of gold, but with the iron chain of duty. Before everything else he was a good soldier, and his wholehearted devotion to the task in hand, however distasteful it might be to him, and the complete grasp he therefore acquired of every phase of military life, were later to win him his laurels in his country's bitter hour of need. He writes :

“ Anyone who does not regard our military labours in the time of peace with a prejudiced eye, must at least recognize our army as the finest school for the training of will and action, and for joy in doing the work. How many thousands of people have learnt under its influence to what mental and physical heights they could rise, and have there won self-confidence and that inward strength which then remained theirs for the rest of their lives.”

It is very certain that the army discipline and training gave Hindenburg “ that inward strength ” which enabled him to achieve three gigantic tasks (the winning of the battle of Tannenberg, the organization of the return of the German armies to Germany after the war, and the work of President) at a time of life when most men think of rest. Other generals in their old age have fought and won battles, but no other man, after four years of gruelling warfare against an ever-increasing enemy, has had to conduct the return of a defeated and starving soldiery into a starving and revolutionary country. It might well have been supposed that a man who had negotiated the difficulties of

such a task might have pleaded to be left to finish his days in peace and quietness when, in his ripe old age, another arduous duty was offered to him. But the old soldier, who had never listened to any voice but that of duty, once again obeyed its call and accepted the high, difficult office of the Presidency.

In the meantime, he lived at Hanover, enjoying a well-earned leisure and following his son's career with the closest attention and pride. At this time, too, he studied politics, but his observations were not reassuring. He studied also the troubles of the Balkan States, and letters to his son, written in October, 1912, evidenced keen interest in their struggles. They reveal also an absolute understanding of the military situations involved, and an unerring appreciation for any weak spot in tactics.

Apart from his interest in the outside world, he was able to enjoy a quiet, agreeable family life. His daughters both married and went to homes of their own. The peaceful hours and days lengthened into years, season followed season, until, one summer day, the telegraph wires flashed to all the countries of the world that message which told of the murder of the heir to the throne of Austria and his wife.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TORCH OF WAR

THE news of the Archduke's death reached the Kaiser at Kiel, and he returned at once to Berlin, with the intention of proceeding to Vienna for the funeral. The journey, however, was not undertaken because there seemed to be no assurance that his person would be safe.

Events moved swiftly. The Austrian Government, having secured a friendly note from Germany, prepared the demands to be made upon Serbia. In Russia, England, and Italy there was considerable anxiety with regard to Austria's plans. The anxiety spread to Berlin, and, on the 20th of July, the German Minister in Vienna made an urgent demand that the precise wording of the ultimatum to Serbia be communicated to him. The required information reached Berlin on the evening of July 22nd, that is to say, at a time when it was not possible for anything to be done. The fatal document, which had been dispatched to Belgrade on the 20th, was so worded as to make war inevitable. The brand had been lighted, and it remained only to be seen how far the blaze would spread.

In the meantime the attitude of Italy was regarded with mistrust, both in Berlin and Vienna, and the reports from the German Embassy in Rome soon showed that the Italians were not disposed to sit and look on quietly at a war between Austria and Serbia. Berchtold,* who had preserved the utmost secrecy with regard to his procedure,

*Foreign Secretary for Austria.

had awakened suspicion in high circles in Rome, where it was believed that this secrecy denoted an Austrian threat to Italian interests in the Balkans. Rome made it plain to the German Ambassador that neither Italy nor Rumania would tolerate the overthrow of Serbia, or even an annexation of Serbian territory by Austria. Berchtold, at first disinclined to come to a clear understanding with Italy, finally yielded to the pressure of Germany, and stated a renunciation of any intent to acquire Serbian territory. On the 28th and 29th of July, Lichnowsky's reports instructed Berlin as to the way matters stood in Italy, and from Vienna came the news that Italy was in agreement with the measures Austria proposed to adopt. The Cabinet in Vienna, in fact, gave its anti-Serbian actions different guises in Berlin, Rome, London, and St. Petersburg, and the lighted brand flared dangerously.

On July the 30th, the German Chancellor gave the Prussian Ministers an outline of the position. He characterized the Italian attitude as "not quite transparent." The dispute between Austria and Serbia was there regarded with apprehension because Italian interests in the Balkans seemed to be threatened.

On July 31st, Italy roundly stated that the demeanour of Austria towards Serbia was "aggressive," and the old enmity towards Austria grew more intense with each passing hour, helped, to no little extent, by the secretive, blundering methods of Berchtold. And there is no doubt that this minister was greatly to blame for Italy's withdrawal from her alliance with Germany and Austria.

Russia did not, in the early days, evince any hesitation.

She ranged herself immediately and openly on the side of Serbia, and violent and unbridled newspaper articles inflamed the whole country against the Central European powers. The German Ambassador did what he could to convince the Russian Ministers that severe measures must be adopted against Serbia, but he spoke to ears that were entirely prejudiced and even on July 6th news had penetrated to Berlin that Russia was preparing for war. And what could an Embassy hope to achieve in a country where the clang of arms was already to be heard and where a belligerent Press was stridently acclaiming war? In addition, the German Ambassador had to contend with a Minister* whose implacable hatred for Austria formed an insurmountable barrier to reasonable negotiation. A lurid light now shone in the sky, and the war clouds gathered.

And France? That Germany in the middle of July at least cherished some hope that France would not interfere is revealed in a letter dated July 16th from the German Chancellor to Graf Noerdern, the Secretary of State for Alsace Lorraine.

“We have,” he wrote, “grounds to assume, and we must hope, that France, burdened, as she now is, with all kinds of difficulties, will do all she can to restrain Russia from interference. . . . If we should only now succeed, not only in holding France quiet but in causing her to force Russia to keep the peace, this should have a reaction most favourable for us upon the Franco-Russian alliance.”

*Sasonow.



L.N.A.

HINDENBURG AS LIEUTENANT (3RD REGIMENT OF FOOT GUARDS).

France gave no determinative indication of her attitude in the first days after the murder. But Poincaré and Viviani were in St. Petersburg between the 20th and the 23rd of July on official business, and there they came to an agreement with the Russian Ministers to make, in Vienna, an intervention favourable to Serbia, and a decision was reached to invite England to join them in this step.

But, divided from the mainland, for the moment aloof from the atmosphere of threat and storm, lay England; and all the nations of Europe watched anxiously to see what she would say. Public opinion there demanded that the murderer be punished, but it was soon made plain that England, also, would not be in agreement with any change in the then existing Balkan conditions. Austria should be satisfied, of course, and the English Ambassador in St. Petersburg went to work according to his instructions. On July the 18th, he reported that Austria's ultimatum to Serbia would not be quietly accepted in Russia. Lord Grey, on the 20th of July, informed the German Ambassador that the idea of a war between European Great Powers was unthinkable and must be stopped at all costs. On the 22nd, Lichnowsky was able to inform Berlin that the British Cabinet would move in the matter of the acceptance of the Austrian Note to Belgrade, provided it was of a proper nature and could be identified with Serbian independence. That England would take part in any war which might break out, even should France and Russia be drawn into it, found little credence in Berlin official circles, and none at all with the German nation as a whole.

On July the 23rd, the Austrian Ambassador to Serbia

■

handed his Government's note in at Belgrade. The violent, immoderate nature of its contents could be excused to a certain extent by the crime which had caused the words to be written. The answer was to be given at the latest on July 25th, at six o'clock in the evening, and it was received by the Austrian Government a few minutes before that time. All the world knows what the result of that answer was. The Serbian Ambassador left Vienna on the same evening and the Austrian Ambassadorial staff received orders to quit Belgrade. Diplomatic relations having been broken off, the command for the mobilization of the Serbian Army was immediately given. The bugles began to call and the flags to fly and the first hysteria began.

Weeks had been wasted in Vienna in the settlement of the terms in which the note to Serbia was to be couched, and the first flush of horror at the murder and sympathy with the Austrian Court had died down. Had Austria had a powerful, decided statesman who had at once demanded the punishment of the murderer and a proper reparation, his actions would have been supported by the righteous indignation of the whole continent. But Berchtold adopted a shilly-shally policy and did not even reveal his intentions in Berlin until it was too late for anything to be done to improve the situation. And Germany had given her agreement to the proceedings of the Austrian Government.

On July the 21st Germany had sought to justify Austria in London, Paris, and St. Petersburg. The Ambassadors were instructed to impress upon the foreign powers that Germany desired a "strict localization of any war that

might break out." But the ultimatum of Austria to Serbia made the worst impression possible, and the German explanations of July 24th in Paris, London, and St. Petersburg were unable to eradicate, or, even, to diminish it. Suggestions from London that Serbia should be given more time fell on deaf ears.

Although Austria was really determined on war, Berchtold wished to reassure Russia to a certain extent, and to that end Graf Szapary informed Sasonow on July 25th that Austria had no intention to lay hands on the sovereignty of Serbia and had no wish to annex territory from her; and, on July 27th, a further assurance was added that no one in Austria wished to threaten Russian interests. But, as Austria refused to discuss the text of the Notes, Sasonow's easily aroused suspicions leaped to openly expressed distrust and negotiations were broken off. At the instance of Germany, there was one more fruitless attempt to renew them on July 30th.

On the 29th of July, Lichnowsky gave Berlin an account of a conversation with Lord Grey, in which the latter expressed himself clearly with regard to England's policy in the event of European war breaking out. His serious remarks were not regarded with the importance due to them. Neither the Kaiser nor his advisers thought it likely that England would do other than remain neutral.

On July the 30th Grey's request to Austria to be content with the occupation of Belgrade, or some part of Serbia, until the Powers should succeed in settling the differences with Russia was handed in and the British representative in Vienna came repeatedly to the authorities for their reply

during the course of the 30th and 31st. No answer, however, was forthcoming, and it was only on August 1st that Berchtold expressed his willingness to discuss the matter. But against this reply must be set an already fixed determination on the part of Austria not to refrain, in any circumstances, from war measures against Serbia. It might have been possible to reach an understanding, but, at the last moment, the news came of the general mobilization of the Russian Army.

Austria intended to send a force of eight Army Corps against Serbia. Russia, immediately after the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia, sent thirteen Army Corps against Austria, and, on the same day, July 29th, the call for general mobilization of the Russian Army was sent out. In Berlin, where this news was followed by information regarding French preparations for war, anxiety became acute, although the Russians sent to say that their operations were not in the least directed against Germany. It could not be concealed, however, that preparations for war were also proceeding apace in the north-western part of Russia. The German Ambassador was instructed to repeat his warnings to Sasonow. The latter construed the warning as a threat, and as such it was reported in Paris and in London.

On the 1st of August, at five o'clock, the German declaration of war against Russia was made. For economic reasons, apart from any questions of Treaties, France was forced to side with Russia in order to protect her solvency. So soon as news of Russian measures for war reached Paris, France started her military preparations. The German Ambassador was accordingly instructed to ask if France

would remain neutral in a war between Russia and Germany. The answer, given on August the 1st, was that "France would do what was demanded by her interests." A few hours after this rather ambiguous reply, the order was given for mobilization of the Army and Navy. In the meantime, the newspapers did not neglect their opportunities, and, referring to the war of 1870, they fanned public opinion and patriotic hysteria to fever heat. On the 3rd of August Germany declared war on France.

England still held back, but on the night of August the 3rd German troops crossed the boundary of Belgium, and on August the 4th England declared war on Germany. The German Parliament sought to exonerate this violation of the Belgian neutrality by stating that the measure was demanded by the exigencies of the moment, and that the country would be compensated, fully and properly, for all damage. On August the 11th France declared war on Austria, and England's declaration against Austria followed on the 13th. Japan, having demanded unconditional withdrawal of the Germans from Kiautschou, a demand which remained unanswered, declared war on August the 23rd.

Little by little, other declarations followed until, finally, all the Powers in the world were engaged in this unprecedented struggle. The brand had done its work and the guns began to speak.

In a large, comfortable house in the town of Hanover, a retired General watched the development of the situation with the utmost closeness. Did he, that iron martinet, who knew so thoroughly everything that could be achieved with

an army of first-class quality, ever remember in those hours that he had once called war "the normal condition for a soldier?" He was older now, and wiser, and perhaps it was rather the words which his father had once written to his mother that came into his mind :

"Oh, God, what a rod of punishment in Thy Hand is this torch of war !"

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EASTERN CAMPAIGN

EVERY man, woman and child in Germany was gripped immediately by the excitement in the air.

Perhaps for the first time in history, the many States which composed the Empire were united in one common feeling. The war had come, and now only the soldiers counted. Every man who wore a uniform was a hero and walked surrounded by a golden haze of romance.

Hindenburg waited in his house at Hanover for his call to arms. He watched the German armies moving off to the fronts; of which he justly writes, "a magnificent power, whose equal the world has seldom seen"; and still he waited. All the soldier in him had reawakened and he was conscious that he knew more of tactics and more about the eastern defence of his country than most other Generals; but he did not know whether he would be called upon to use his knowledge. It seemed to him that there were plenty of younger men who would come first. He waited.

All German eyes were turned to the fronts, and the first news which reached the waiting crowds was good. The fall of Liège, the successful result of the Battle at Mulhouse, the irresistible onward sweep of the armies through Belgium were acclaimed and celebrated. Even from the East came no threatening tidings.

At last the anxiously-watched-for telegram was delivered to von Hindenburg at three o'clock in the afternoon. It contained an inquiry from the Kaiser as to whether the General was prepared for immediate employment. His reply, "Am ready," had hardly been dispatched when he

received a second telegram from Headquarters. This informed him that General Ludendorff would arrive in Hanover at three o'clock the following morning; and it was followed by a third message appointing Hindenburg as Leader of the Army in the East. Preparations followed.

Towards three o'clock in the morning Hindenburg drove to the station to await the special train in which Ludendorff was being hurried to Hanover. He had been hastily recalled from the Western Front to Coblenz and personally instructed by Moltke. The situation in East Prussia had become suddenly intensely serious, for the Commander of the 8th Army* had seen fit to cut short activities after the victorious battle at Gumbinnen because he had news of the approach towards the south boundary of Prussia of an overwhelming Russian force, and he thought the only possible chance to stem the enemy's tide was to evacuate the whole of East Prussia. At General Headquarters it was hastily decided that a change of leadership in the East was imperative, and the leadership of the Army was placed in Hindenburg's hands, while Ludendorff was appointed Chief Officer of the General Staff of the 8th Army.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who did not know each other, met at about four o'clock in the morning of August the 23rd. In his memoirs, Hindenburg states that only at the moment when the train drove into the station was he able completely to tear his thoughts away from the home he had left in such a hurry. Ludendorff immediately explained the position in the East to Hindenburg, according to von Moltke's instructions. Since then, the Army, supported by garrisons from fortresses and certain com-

*General von Prittwitz,

panies of the Militia, had moved into positions in preparation for the defence of the southern frontier of West and East Prussia from the Vistula to the lake district by Lötzen. The Army had met the Russians on the 17th of August at Stallupönen and on the 19th and 20th at Gumbinnen. Here the battle had been broken off owing to the threat to the German rear and flank from the Russian approach to the southern boundary line. The High Command of the Eastern Army having thus cut short the action at Gumbinnen reported to General Headquarters that they were no longer in a position to hold the country east of the Vistula. Ludendorff further delivered the Kaiser's order that the Russians were to be attacked, and reported that he (Ludendorff) had given certain urgent orders from Coblenz to ensure that operations went forward on the territory east of the Vistula. Moltke had strongly disapproved the suggestion of evacuation.

The union of Hindenburg and Ludendorff became very close. Much has been written about their respective abilities, and attempts have been made to give the glory for their achievements solely to one or to the other. It seems, however, that to Hindenburg, without doubt, belonged the ideas and the tactical methods employed, while Ludendorff accepted the whole responsibility of their execution. Hindenburg had the vision and grasp of the situation and saw with clear eyes what the situation demanded. It was, however, the dynamic personality of Ludendorff and his untiring energy that carried out the ideas of the master tactician. In his book, *Hindenburg*, the French General Buat compares the memoirs which both Hindenburg and Ludendorff published and observes that whereas Hinden-

burg practically always uses the pronoun "we," Ludendorff's book is characterized by a constantly recurring use of the word "I." Buat's final judgment of the combination of these two men is expressed in the words :

"That the latter (Ludendorff) was the arm, is certain ; that in some cases, and not always the happiest, he was also the head is beyond doubt. But, if the Field-Marshal (Hindenburg) often permitted himself to approve suggestions, he never did so without complete awareness of what he did, for he had great insight. It is only relatively that one may accuse him of a certain weakness of character ; for Ludendorff possessed a stronger will, the will of a fanatic, which drives straight to its goal without any consideration of obstacles or people who may be in the way. In the marriage effected on August 23rd, 1914, the first Quartermaster-General was the dominating husband."

At least there is no doubt that Hindenburg and Ludendorff were well suited to one another, and it is certain that Hindenburg's assured and mature judgments and the range of his vision in matters military secured the respect of "the dominating husband" and possibly restrained his irritable and less perfectly balanced temper.

Their conversation at this first meeting did not occupy more than half an hour, at the end of which time they parted to snatch some sleep.

"So," writes Hindenburg, "we went to meet a common future, fully conscious of its seriousness, but

also full of firm trust in God, in our gallant troops and, not least, in each other. Common thoughts and common deeds were now to unite us over a period of years."

On August the 23rd, early in the afternoon, the two Generals reached Marienburg, where were their Headquarters. As Marienburg lies to the east of the Vistula, the place of action was already reached, and Hindenburg made an immediate study of recent developments. The 20th Army Corps had moved eastwards from its frontier station at Neidenburg, and the 3rd Reserve Division, supporting the 20th Army Corps, had arrived at Allenstein. The 1st Army Corps, which had been ordered to German Eylau, had been delayed; but the 17th Army Corps and the 1st Reserves had arrived on foot in the neighbourhood of Gerdauen. A Russian Cavalry Corps was reported to be at Angerburg and another at Darkehmen. One Division of Samsonoff's Army had apparently reached Ortelsburg, and it was reported that Johannisburg was already in the hands of the enemy.

The pocket-book of a fallen Russian officer yielded up a piece of paper from which the intentions of the enemy could be ascertained, plans for a concentrated attack upon the German 8th Army. The Russian Army of Rennenkampf, consisting of 246,000 men and 800 guns had been in action against the Germans at Gumbinnen. The 2nd Russian Army which was approaching from the south under Samsonoff consisted of 289,000 men and 780 guns. Against these forces, the Germans had 210,000 men and 600 guns, numbers which had been, of course, reduced by

the actions* in which a part of the army had already been engaged.

Obviously, the only chance for the Germans was to defeat Samsonoff utterly and then to drive Rennenkampf's army away from East Prussia where it was bringing plunder, murder and ruin in its train. Hindenburg's plan was uncomplicated but very bold, and it was dependent for its success upon the morale of the German soldiers. However, as he himself says, a man at whose back lies his home, his wife and children, and all he holds dear, fights more determinedly to prevent a ruthless foe from gaining access to them, and the men in this army were Prussians, "children of the threatened province." Against Samsonoff's front, therefore, Hindenburg placed a thin line of soldiers which might "give to the pressure of the opposing masses, if only it did not break," and while this line faced the Russian hosts, two strong detachments were to make decisive attacks from right and left. The 1st Army Corps, supported by Militia, were brought in from the north-west, and the 17th Army Corps and 1st Reserve Corps with a Brigade of Militia were brought from the north and the north-east. Hindenburg realized that complete annihilation of his opponents represented the only chance to save Prussia from further ghastly ravages, and he never for an instant forgot the fight between Russia and Austria-Hungary that was being waged in Galicia and Poland.

"Should our first blow not be final," he wrote,† "then the danger to our homes would remain like a gnawing

*Stallupönen and Gumbinnen.

†*Aus meinem Leben.*

disease, the murder and burning in East Prussia would go unrevenged and our ally* in the south would wait in vain for our assistance."

Against Rennenkampf, lying in the north-east, a Division of Cavalry, some Reserves and two Militia Reserves were placed. Hindenburg hoped that Rennenkampf would be deceived as to the strength against him and that, at the least, the little army would serve to cover the operations of the forces attacking Samsonoff. It was also a question whether Rennenkampf would not come to the help of Samsonoff by falling upon the Germans from the rear, for the little force left over against his positions would be powerless to prevent this development, even though they were strengthened by the addition of two Militia Brigades, which were even then *en route* from Schleswig-Holstein.

On August the 24th, Hindenburg travelled to the Headquarters of the 20th Army Corps at Tannenberg, the spot where the Slavs had triumphed over the Germans more than five centuries ago, and where now was to come so signal a reversal of the situation. On the same day the German soldiers started on their march to outflank the enemy. The roads were full of refugees, who, with what goods they could carry, were trying to make for safety. These straying numbers on the roads prevented the easy movement of the Army. It was reckoned that the time required to surround the Russians would be two days, so that manœuvre could first become operative on the 26th. Until then, the thin centre line of the front had to hold on. In places, this line gave and was forced back on to the left

*Austria.

wing, driven to bend by the shattering fire and overwhelming numbers of the enemy. It bent, but it did not break. Hindenburg's boundless trust in his soldiers was not in vain. In the meantime his glance was anxious, for it seemed possible that the Russians would extend over Lautenburg and destroy the flanking movement. News was also received that Rennenkampf was on the march, but he was moving slowly and westwards towards Königsberg. It looked almost as if the Russians had given up their original plans or else that they were deceived as to where the real strength of the German Army lay.

The 26th of August saw the beginning of the terrible struggle which stretched from Lautenburg to a spot north of Bischofsburg. The battle was fought in groups along a front of about seventy-five miles, and it occurred "in a series of attacks and not in one decided action."

The right wing, under General von Francois, made its advance towards Usdau.

The struggle at Bischofsburg was grim. The German soldiers, though far outnumbered, fought doggedly through the evening hours.

The right wing of Samsonoff's army was severely beaten by the German 17th Army Corps and 1st Reserve Corps, supported by Militia, and was forced to retire to Ortelsburg.

So far, so good. But Headquarters awaited with great anxiety what the next day would bring forth. It was sure that the Russians would offer a further strong resistance. Disquieting reports arrived. One of Rennenkampf's corps was moving through Augersburg, and the question arose—Would not his corps attack from the rear the left wing German attacking party? Further, the flank and rear of

the German west wing was menaced by a strong detachment of Russian cavalry. There was no certainty that this was not supported by infantry.

“The crisis of the battle,” writes Hindenburg, “had reached its highest mark. The question forces its way into our minds: How will the situation develop if . . . the decision should be delayed for several days? Is it surprising that heavy thoughts are in many hearts, if hesitation threatens to overcome fixed determination, if distraction forces its presence into the place where previously only clear ideas held sway? Shouldn’t we, after all, strengthen our force against Rennenkampf and do only half work against Samsonoff? Is it not better to refrain from attempting the destruction of the Narew army in order certainly to save ourselves from annihilation? We overcome the crisis within us, remain true to the decisions made and again seek a solution with all our strength.”

Accordingly, the order was given which commanded the Germans to approach the enemy at four o’clock in the morning and to “act with the greatest energy.” The 27th of August was a great day. The enemy retreated and finally fled from the battle-fields. Further, the threat from Rennenkampf’s forces existed “only in the imagination of an airman.” In reality, he was still marching upon the strong fortress of Königsberg, where he probably still thought lay the full force of the German defences. Samsonoff’s right wing was broken and routed; the danger to his left wing grew hourly more and more certain. On the

same day Francois and Scholtz were successful in their attacks upon the enemy posts at Usdau. The Russians might now advance upon Allenstein (the centre front) as they wished. It would end in their ruin, for the order was now given to surround the central force of their army, their 13th and 15th Army Corps. All day, on the 28th, the savage fight continued. The Russian losses were appalling, and the German sufficiently heavy for the small army. Desperate resistance was offered, but it was in vain, and, on the 29th, the principal portion of the Russian Army was finally and utterly defeated at Hohenstein. And on all these days, completely deceived by Hindenburg's amazing strategy, Rennenkampf marched peacefully on Königsberg. While his comrade was being defeated by a far smaller force, he wasted those hours and days in futile inaction, and this was the General who, of all Russian military leaders, had the greatest name.

A few German troops were withdrawn from the battle, so that they might cover, in case of need, the terrible final stages. Long columns of prisoners appeared, tattered, worn-out, and many wounded. The files grew and grew to an almost incredible extent. Hindenburg had occasion to notice here how the Prussian soldiers almost immediately lost their animosity, and in how humane a manner they treated the prisoners. Their hatred, however, against the Cossacks was scarcely to be restrained, and it frequently occurred that these tore the stripes from their trousers that they might not be recognized as such. It must not be inferred that any Prussian soldier so forgot his rigid training and discipline as to torture these men, but it is certain that they were roughly handled by those who had

seen the devastation of their country, had seen their homes burnt and who knew of other unspeakable atrocities against non-combatants committed by this half-savage soldiery. The very fact that the Cossacks tried to conceal their identity by the mutilation of their uniform goes to show, at least, that some consciousness of guilt existed among them.

On August the 30th, the Russians attacked from east and south, in an endeavour to break through the surrounding Germans and to release their comrades from the fast-narrowing circle around them. From Myszyniec and from Ostrolenka came these strong, fresh troops, marching against the backs of the Germans. Other Russian columns of considerable strength were reported to be moving. But Hindenburg held to his plans, which had so far been successful. Reserves were sent against the new hosts. Closer and closer swept the German encirclement, and the imprisoned Russians sought their escape now this way and now that, but in vain. The gruelling fire to which they were subjected gave them no chance. From the direction of Landsberg, the Rennenkampf cavalry was approaching the field of Tannenberg, but at Allenstein a strong force of German soldiers had been mustered. These men were tired from the days of desperate fighting through which they had passed, but they had all the consciousness of their marvellous victory to support them. There was not a man who was not ready to do his utmost and his more than utmost, if need be, to ensure that their triumph might not be wrenched away. But the 31st of August saw the retreat of Rennenkampf upon Allenburg and Augersburg, and the close of the day saw the final collapse of Samsonoff's army.

The Battle of Tannenberg was won, and Hindenburg was able to send the Kaiser his report on the work done.

“I humbly beg to report to your Majesty that the struggle with the greatest part of the Russian Army is finished. The 13th, 15th and 18th Army Corps have been annihilated. Up till the present, there are over 60,000 prisoners, including the Generals commanding the 13th and 15th Army Corps. The guns are still in the woods and are being collected. The spoils, which are extraordinarily great, cannot at the present time be detailed. The corps which were outside the central struggle (the 1st and 6th) have also suffered heavily and are in flight through Mława and Myszyniec.”

The results of that terrific task were flashed in those few, dry words to the Kaiser, and the name of their sender became, in one moment, a household word throughout his country. Like Byron, he had become famous in a day, for, outside military circles, he had been entirely unknown. The Kaiser conferred upon him the Order *Pour le Mérite*. And Hindenburg?

“In Allenstein, our new Military Headquarters, I went during the service to the church in the neighbourhood of the old castle. As the priest pronounced the benediction all those present, young soldiers and old *Landstürmer** sank to their knees, under the immense impression left on them by their past experiences. A worthy conclusion to their deeds of heroism.”

*Territorials.

CHAPTER SIX

HINDENBURG'S VICTORIES IN EAST PRUSSIA

ON August the 31st, the High Command of the 8th Army received a telegram stating that the 11th Army Corps, a Reserve Corps of Guards and the 8th Cavalry Division were being conveyed to the Eastern Front. The pursuit of the beaten Russian Army by what reserves could be spared was required, and also the clearance of the east frontier from Rennenkampf's army. The telegram concluded by stating that, should the position in East Prussia permit of such a step, the 8th Army would then proceed in the direction of Warsaw. This meant that the plan of war agreed upon between Germany and Austria-Hungary was to be adopted if it was possible. The plan was simply that the Austrian forces were to advance in strength and attack the eastern part of Russian Poland, while the German Army crossed over the Narew from East Prussia to meet them. That had been the plan, but Hindenburg writes :—

“ A great and fine idea ; but, in the present position, it had considerable weakness. It did not take into account that Austria-Hungary would send a strong army to the Serbian frontier, nor that Russia would be able to stand fully equipped on the frontier a few weeks after the outbreak of hostilities, nor that 800,000 men would be sent against East Prussia, and, least of all, the fact that this plan had already been betrayed to the Russian General Staff in the time of peace.”

Such was the situation with which Hindenburg was faced. Rennenkampf's strong force was still in its positions and Austria was engaged in a bitter struggle, of which the result could in no sense be regarded as a foregone conclusion. It was obvious, however, that Prussia must first be freed from Rennenkampf's army before the Germans could undertake a southward march to the aid of her ally.

Rennenkampf's men were drawn up along a line stretching from the Deime, through Allenburg, Gerdauen and Angerburg. Hindenburg was uninformed of what might lie in the district south-east of the Masovian lakes. There was strong suspicion that Grajewo and its neighbourhood were occupied by Russians. Some considerable activity was observed in the district to the rear of Rennenkampf's army, and there seemed to be advances towards the south-west and the west. There was no doubt that Rennenkampf was being reinforced, for his communications were excellent. The Russian leader dealt with a degree of indecision and lack of energy that seems now almost incredible. With more than twenty Divisions of Infantry at his disposal, he simply stood still, and continued to stand still while the German reinforcements were being brought along as fast as wheels could carry them. Hindenburg writes that the "military calling has already, and surprisingly quickly, worn out even strong characters. Where, one year, active ability and driving force have existed, the next year can reveal an unfruitful mind and a faint heart. This has often been the tragedy of great military men."

The absolute defeat of Samsonoff had served to show Rennenkampf that the full strength of the German Army did not lie in Königsberg, as he had thought. He probably

still suspected that no small force occupied the fortress, and it seemed to him safer to lie between the Kurische Haff and the Masovian Lakes, in his well-strengthened positions. If he remained where he was, it was almost impossible for the Germans to repeat the tactics of Tannenberg. From the north nothing could be attempted, from the south such manœuvres would be attended with the greatest difficulty. Should the Russian arms be attended with little success or none, they would fall back upon Russia. It was, at any rate, questionable if the Germans could repeat their success against Samsonoff; and, as Samsonoff was defeated in attacking, Rennenkampf lay passively where he was. His lack of energy and decision cost him the battle. Against him was a leader who had both the courage and the purpose to carry out his ideas, and under him were Prussian soldiers capable of battling to the last ounce of their strength, soldiers for whom war appeared indeed to be "a normal condition." The position which Hindenburg now had to consider is best explained by himself.

"The great superiority in numbers of the Rennenkampf army," he writes, "was sufficient to enable him to destroy even our strengthened 8th Army. But a premature withdrawal on his part would rob us of the fruits of our new operations and would make it impossible for us to press on to Warsaw in reasonable time and also prevent us from giving the Austrians immediate support. We had, therefore, to be both careful and enterprising."

By September the 5th the German armies were in their positions, along a front stretching from Willenberg to

Königsberg. The 10th, 11th, 1st Reserve and Guard Reserve Corps were then sent with the troops from Königsberg against the enemy front. The 1st and 18th Corps were ordered to press through the Lake District, and the 3rd Reserve Division was ordered to follow round south of the Lake District. Two Cavalry Divisions were held in readiness to charge forward as soon as the narrow ways through the Lakes had been opened up for them. The German leader had spread a strength of fourteen Infantry Divisions over a front of more than 100 miles. On the 6th and 7th of September, as the German troops approached the Russian defences, it was possible to see something of the situation in general. At Insterburg and Wehlau were heavily massed forces of the enemy. Hindenburg suspected that there were even stronger troops to the north of Nordenburg. However, they remained inactive. The 7th of September saw the 3rd Reserve Division's great victory at Bialla, in which about half the 22nd Russian Corps was practically destroyed, and the 1st and 17th Corps began to break through the Lake District. It was hardly possible for Rennenkampf to delay more than twenty-four hours or so longer without showing whether he intended to fight or to retire. Hindenburg watched developments with an anxious heart. It seemed that three more Reserve Divisions had reached the battle-field, to increase the already enormous numbers of the Russians.

The 8th of September set all doubts at rest. The fight blazed into action along the whole front. The German frontal attack did not succeed in gaining an inch of ground, but the right wing managed to break through the Russians drawn up east of the Masovian Lakes and to turn to the

north and the north-east. The aim of these troops was to try and reach the Russian communication lines. The Cavalry Divisions were set in motion, for it seemed that the way to this goal was clear. On the 9th of September the battle raged further, from Angerburg to the Kurische-Haff.

The German line held, but was unable to advance, though the Divisions which had forced their way through to the east of the lakes moved rapidly onwards. The Cavalry Divisions had, however, to meet an unexpected attack by the enemy, and were unable to break this down with the expedition which was required. South of the lakes, the 3rd Reserve Division defeated a greatly superior Russian force at Lyck. From the south, therefore, there was nothing more for Hindenburg to fear.

In the north, however, German observation aeroplanes brought disquieting tidings. Two enemy Corps were plainly seen, and a third was being marched to the scene of action by Tilsit. What, wondered Hindenburg, would be the fate of that thin, far-stretched battle line if a determined Russian leader should fall upon it with his vast numbers of men? But it was very far from Rennankampf's intention to risk an attack. On the night of September the 9th the German patrols pressed into the enemy trenches at Gerdauen. They were empty. "The opponent is retiring," was the message sent immediately to Hindenburg and his staff, a message which seemed to them incredible. The 1st Reserve Corps received orders to advance against Insterburg, and to proceed with caution. Midday on September the 10th saw the unwelcome news confirmed. Rennankampf's army was indeed in full retirement, although the Russians were still fighting desperately all along the

line. Heavily massed attacks were being launched against the Russians. The right-wing corps and Cavalry Divisions were directed to the north-east, against the enemy communications, from Insterburg to Kowno.

Covered by their attacking Corps, the long columns of Russians withdrew slowly, closely pursued by the Germans. September 11th was a day of particularly savage fighting, and Insterburg was captured by the Germans. Though it was slow, the Russian retreat was steady, and it would be impossible for the Germans to pursue *Rennenkampf* across the Niemen. Should the retreat be carried out in safety, then Hindenburg's plans would have to be regarded as having failed. There were still a few days in which the situation might be retrieved and the Russian army rendered weak and useless. The 3rd Reserve Division reached Suwalki (Russian ground) on September 12th. *Rennenkampf's* southern wing narrowly escaped being surrounded and cut off. The retreat continued and every passing hour increased the German impatience: it seemed that the men as well as the leaders recognized the urgency of the situation.

Hindenburg pays a glowing tribute to the magnificent achievements of some of the pursuers. The men marched and fought, marched and fought until they dropped to the ground from sheer fatigue. On the 12th of September the Headquarters were moved to Insterburg, the former Headquarters of *Rennenkampf*. Long, sullen columns of Russian prisoners were conveyed westward, and the victorious German armies pressed onwards to the east. Hindenburg, in his fastidiousness, shrank somewhat from the occupation of the rooms so recently vacated by the Russian Commanders. He speaks scornfully of "remark-

able traces of Russian *Halb-Kultur*”* and states that the pungent smell of scent did not serve to eradicate other and even less agreeable odours. A smell of perfume in the rooms of a Commanding General at the front must certainly have produced a strange impression upon such a man as the German Commander.

Hindenburg relates how exactly one year later he returned through Insterburg from a day's hunting.

“ At the market-place, my car was turned back because a thanksgiving service was being held there to commemorate the release of the town from Russian occupation. I had to go by another route. *Sic transit gloria mundi!* No one had recognized me.”

On the 13th of September, German troops reached Eydtkuhnen and directed heavy fire into the retreating Russian hosts. The pursuit had by this time turned the retreat into a rout. The fleeing masses had only one idea—to escape as quickly as possible behind the wood and marsh country to the west of the line from Olita to Wilewy. They knew that there they would be safe from German pursuit. To prevent annihilation of a large part of his army Rennenkampf drew up a strong force south of the high road from Wirballen to Wzlkowyszki, which the Germans had not succeeded in reaching by the 13th of September. One day only remained to the Germans, after which the Russians would have withdrawn to safety across the swamps. The end of the battle is well known. Thousands of Russians perished miserably in the swamps in

*Semi-culture.

their attempt to escape from the fire of the Germans. It was only a shadow of his former force that Rennenkampf was able to lead to safety. In three weeks the Russians had lost a quarter of a million men and 650 guns, not to mention huge quantities of equipment and stores. East Prussia was cleared, and Hindenburg was hailed as the saviour of his country.

In November, 1914, a card was delivered to the Field Post which bore the address, "To the most popular man in Germany." This was handed, without any hesitation, to Hindenburg. During the fourth month of the war it was to be seen that the Field postman had made no mistake. The shops vied with one another in selling "Hindenburg cigars," "Hindenburg boots," "Hindenburg ties," etc., whilst the restaurants labelled their best dishes with the name of the great General. The town of Zabrze, in Upper Silesia, changed its Polish name and became Hindenburg. A school-mistress in the small town of Königshütte* sent to a newspaper a number of letters written by little girls in her class to the victorious leader of the 8th Army. Some of these children, whose ages ranged from eight to ten, expressed their feelings very well indeed, as the following examples show:—

"DEAR MR. HINDENBURG,

"Thank you very much for being so energetic and for protecting our Fatherland so well. I hope the foe won't come into our country. We are so well protected. We often see aeroplanes over the Redenberg, but they are not enemy ones. When the great victory came, we

*In Upper Silesia.

had no lessons. Flags were hanging everywhere. Even now the flags are still flying. Zabrze has taken your name. Good-bye, and go on hitting as hard as you can."

"DEAR MR. HINDENBURG,

"You are already very old and still catch so many Russians. I am very pleased when Russians are taken prisoner. I pray every day that we may not lose. If God keeps on giving us such big victories, we certainly shan't lose. When 40,000 Russians were captured, we had a holiday. Please capture some more Russians as quickly as possible, and don't let yourself be shot dead by stupid Russians. My very best wishes."

And another young lady had ambition :—

"I should be pleased if you would send me a little Russian," she wrote. "What does it look like on the battle-field? Have you been wounded yet? I have heard that you are very able. Has Russia still many soldiers? I hope it will soon be peace. Please write soon!"

Christmas, 1914, gave astonishing proof of the esteem and affection with which Hindenburg was regarded by the German people. Over 700 letters arrived in which people asked whether he would find the latest remedy for rheumatism useful. Over 300 more wished to send him means for subduing the activities of certain insects, while a further 600 offered him tobacco, pipes and wine. Thou-

sands of other Christmas presents were pressed upon him. Old ladies wished to send him galoshes and certain young ones pillows stuffed with their own hair !

The little sister of a war-artist, for whom Hindenburg had often sat, sent him a request that he would beat the Russians again so that more school holidays would be given. Hindenburg's reply was that he sent his best wishes to the little girl and an explanation that the Russians had only been left in peace for the present because at Christmas-time there were holidays in any case.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ON THE SILESIAN FRONT

THE battle of the Masovian Lakes had not quite reached its conclusion when, on September 13th, the leaders of the 8th Army received a telegram from the High Command.

“Set free two Army Corps as soon as possible and prepare them for transport to Krakow.”

Hindenburg and his staff were puzzled. After some discussion they dispatched the following telegram :—

“Pursuit finished to-morrow. Victory seems complete. Offensive against Narew positions possible in about ten days in settled direction. But Austria requests support by sending the army to Krakow and Upper Silesia. Four Army Corps and one Cavalry Division can be spared for this. Railway transport alone will take twenty days. Long marches towards Austrian left wing. Help reaches there late. Please send decision. Army would have, in any circumstances, to keep its independence there.”

The reply of the High Command came on the next day. It read :—

“Operations across the Narew considered as inopportune in view of present situation of the Austrians. Direct support of the Austrians is politically essential.

“Operations from Silesia come into question. . . .

“Independence of the Army will be preserved even if co-operating with the Austrians.”

Hindenburg was definitely a man who lived and moved and had his being in things military. He recognized all military expedients, he understood perfectly all military crises, and knew how to deal with the means at his disposal to the greatest advantage. But political necessity? He knew nothing of that, and he hated that matters political should interfere with matters military. Austria's situation, her defeat by an overwhelming enemy force, had rendered immediate support a "political necessity," and on September the 15th, Hindenburg was obliged to part with Ludendorff, his indispensable colleague, who was appointed Chief of the 9th Army which was to be reorganized in Upper Silesia.

The separation, however, was a very transient one, for the Kaiser's order that Hindenburg was to take over the command of the 9th Army reached him on September the 17th. At the same time, however, he was to hold himself at the disposal of what remained of the 8th Army in East Prussia. This force, denuded of four Army Corps and one Cavalry Division, was placed under the command of General von Schubert.

On the 18th of September, in the early hours of the morning, Hindenburg left his quarters at Insterburg, by motor-car, for Breslau. It was a two-days' journey, and he passed through his native town of Posen. The first part of the way led across the ground which had lately been the scene of such tremendous battles. He drove past ruined barns, shot-torn trees, and burnt homesteads. Little by little the scene became less desolate, and districts which had been undisturbed by the war were reached. Here, however, were still pathetic sights to remind the General of what had

passed. On the roads, with their faces turned eastwards again, refugees were streaming back to their home villages. They would build up their ruins again and recultivate their ravaged country. Many of them had lost everything in the general chaos, but no sooner were the Russians out of the country than they quietly returned to build up their broken villages.

Hindenburg must have felt that they were a people worth fighting for, with their uncomplaining courage and indestructible hope. In his thoughts he accompanied them back along the road he had recently travelled, to their charred and shot-torn homes. His car bore him onwards through simple villages and towns, where the inhabitants went peacefully about their daily work.

Hindenburg regarded the future with a saddened mind. He realized that he was parting from his absolute independence. The telegram from the High Command had assured him that the army would remain independent, but his wisdom instructed him that war fought at the side of an ally would not offer him the same freedom of action that had been his in East Prussia. It was not for nothing that he had studied military history so closely. "Up to the present," he writes, "we had had our measure of golden military freedom. But I guessed what the future would be from the history of other coalition wars."

The troops, consisting of the 11th, 17th, 20th, Reserve Corps of Guards, a Corps of Militia, 35th Reserve Division, a Militia Division and the 8th Cavalry Division were brought to the north of Krakow in close communication with the Austro-Hungarian left wing. Headquarters were set up

temporarily at Beuthen in Upper Silesia. At the end of September the centre part of the Army was marched towards Kielce. The High Command of the Austro-Hungarian Army sent a very small army (four Infantry Divisions and one Cavalry Division) from Krakow across the Vistula, in a northerly direction. Hindenburg gives much credit, at this point, to the Austrian Command. "They did not think they could spare more troops from the south of the river. They intended a decisive attack at this spot. This plan of our ally was bold and its originator deserved all honour. The only question was—could the greatly weakened army carry it through in spite of the support afforded them? My thoughts were set at rest to some extent by the hope that the Russians, so soon as they became aware of our German troops in Poland, would throw their full strength against us and thus make possible a success for our ally."

Meanwhile, Hindenburg and his staff had no very clear view of Russian activities. The retreating Austrians had not been pursued with any great show of determination. There were signs that a strong force of Cavalry and some other troops were in readiness to the north of the Vistula. It seemed that another Russian army was being collected at Ivangorod. There was also a report that to the west of Warsaw a strong position had been taken up along a front facing west.

The operations went forward, and the march, in these uncertain circumstances, was awaited to be met at any moment with unexpected developments. Russian Poland was reached, and the men of the German Armies were rapidly made acquainted with that which they describe as

"*Polnische Wirtschaft*."* "Dirt," writes Hindenburg, "was there in every form, not only in the realm of nature, but also in the so-called human habitations and on the people themselves. In crossing our frontier, we seemed to pass into another world." There was nothing but dirt and indifference everywhere; the population simply stared with dull eyes at the armies. Hindenburg was horrified by what he saw of the conditions under which these degraded people lived. It seemed to him scarcely possible that such circumstances should exist in the civilized world.

This time the German advance was rendered as difficult as possible by the opponent, and twelve Russian Army Corps were withdrawn from the main Austrian battle-front with the intention of using them against the Germans over the Vistula to the south of Ivangorod. On the 6th of October, the Germans reached the Vistula, and succeeded in repulsing the Russian troops to the west of the river. The north wing, however, was threatened from the direction of Ivangorod and Warsaw. It was therefore necessary to free this part of the line from danger before operations could be carried out in an easterly direction across the Vistula. Accordingly the German forces were marched rapidly northwards, and, on the other bank of the river, the Russians moved in the same direction, towards Warsaw. To cut off the Germans, strong Russian detachments were ordered to cross the Vistula at Ivangorod and south of that town. Severe fighting took place, and the Russians were beaten back, although the Germans were not able to dislodge them entirely from taking up positions on the west bank of the river. Within twenty-four hours' march

* Polish husbandry.

of Warsaw, the German left wing, under Mackensen, met the enemy, whose far superior numbers were forced to retire. Twelve hours later, the German attack was checked, but not forced to retire. For the second time in the history of the campaign against Russia, an important document fell into the hands of the Germans on the battlefield. This time, the paper revealed the strength of the enemy, and also his intentions. There were no fewer than four Russian armies opposing the Germans—sixty divisions against eighteen. In Warsaw there were fourteen enemy Divisions against five German Divisions. In the scale against Germany, too, was the fact that her armies had marched over 200 miles in fourteen days and that the original fighting strength had been reduced, in many cases, to half and even a quarter of what they had been by the fighting in East Prussia. Hindenburg might have found himself in agreement with Henry V before Agincourt that “the fewer men, the greater share of honour,” and if, like that warlike monarch, he “coveted honour,” that enormous mass of troops against him may not have caused his spirit to weaken. Outwardly, he was too much of a martinet to allow himself to show any dismay; but inwardly he may have thought there was little chance to do anything but to achieve an empty honour for his arms.

The intention of the enemy was to hold the Germans along the west bank of the Vistula, while a decisive blow was delivered from Warsaw. The force of this plan appealed to Hindenburg as being very great. It was the idea of the Grand Duke Nicholas, and Hindenburg estimates it as the best that this General ever evolved. In 1897, he had had a short conversation with the Grand Duke on

the subject of the best use of artillery. In East Prussia, Nicholas had apparently played the part of onlooker for a short period—now Hindenburg was brought in contact with him as active opponent.

Faced with this bitter danger—by which, should Nicholas's plan be successful, the whole situation in the East would be irretrievably lost—Hindenburg set himself to find means to overcome it. Again, he produced a bold and simple strategy. It was decided to release as many troops as could possibly be spared from the Vistula line from Ivangorod southwards and concentrate them on the left wing. An attack was then to be made on Warsaw before further Russian troops could be brought there; a death-blow was to be dealt to the Russian plans, but it depended upon the speed with which it could be carried out and the number of men which could be spared. The Austrian High Command was therefore requested at once to direct all the Divisions which could be freed to the left of the Vistula against Warsaw. But alas! Hindenburg's forebodings with regard to the difficulties connected with coalition warfare were now fulfilled. The Austrian leaders did not appreciate the position sufficiently to refrain from raising comments and questions which were of secondary importance. Austria was prepared to support Hindenburg, but only by sending men to release the German troops from their positions on the Vistula. This, when time meant everything! Hindenburg saw only the advantage that it would keep the soldiers of the two nations apart, and, as the ally to whose help he had hurried held firm, he was obliged to agree to the suggestion made, although he knew that the delay might cost him the battle.

He had reason for his anxiety. More and more masses of Russians poured out of Warsaw, and some crossed the Vistula lower down. The left flank of the Germans was also in danger of being turned by the quickly developing numbers spreading towards the west. In Galicia the hoped-for success had not been attained, although there it was obvious that great numbers had been withdrawn from the Austrian front and set against the German 9th Army.

The situation had to be saved. On the night of October the 18th, therefore, and on the 19th, the field round Warsaw was left in possession of the Russians. Mackensen's army was withdrawn to a position between Rawa and Lowicz. Hindenburg hoped that the enemy would push against this front, when he would send the Corps released by the Austrians to deliver a decisive blow from the south against the strongest part of the Russian Army. But, as Hindenburg writes :

“Conditions necessary to the carrying out of this plan were that Mackensen's troops would be able to hold out against the attack of the Russian hordes, that the Austro-Hungarian defence of the Vistula would stand so firmly that our intended blow should be protected against a Russian outflanking movement from the east.”

The Austrian leaders had plans of their own, and they determined to allow the Russians to cross the Vistula to the north of Ivangorod and to destroy them as they came. The plan, as Hindenburg admits, was a good one in itself, and one which had often proved useful in the past. But, in the uncertain position in which Germany and Austria were

placed, it was one which was fraught with grave danger. Hindenburg and his Staff advised against it being attempted—but in vain. The Russians were allowed to cross, but the soldiers who had to oppose them were not Prussians. At first there was some success, but this dwindled, and ended in the retreat of the Austrians. Hindenburg was now left to face the fact that the right wing of his attacking force had become exposed, and he was obliged to refrain from his attempt on Warsaw. It seemed best to him to retire for the present and to strike later, in another place.

Many considerations disturbed Hindenburg. What would the people at home think as the retreat approached the German frontier? In Silesia, the horrors which had accompanied the occupation of East Prussia by the Russians were remembered and discussed. Was it possible that this rich district with its flourishing mines was to suffer in a similar way?

The determination of Hindenburg was taken, however, and a general retreat in the direction of Czenstochau was begun on October the 27th. But the retreat had to be covered somehow, and a destruction of roads and railway lines was ordered until it was found possible to work out a new plan.

Hindenburg, whose attention to matters of detail was so thorough, was amazed by the extraordinary use made by the Russians of Marconi messages, which were simply picked up by the Germans, who were thus constantly placed in possession of valuable information. Members of the Staff in command were rendered nervous by the knowledge of the impossible superiority of the Russian numbers, but Hindenburg had the most complete faith in officers of lower

rank and in the fighting men. At this point, however, it seemed to many that the final ruin of the German forces was only a matter of time. The Russians would choose their moment to strike, and, in the meantime, they celebrated their rather hollow triumph. The Germans had retired, and were apparently beaten.

On November the 1st, the following Marconi message was picked up by the Germans :

“ As we have now been in pursuit for 120 *werst*, we think it time to leave the following-up in the hands of the Cavalry. The Infantry is tired and the going difficult.”

As Hindenburg states, he and his staff were able to draw breath and to consider their new plans. On this same day arrived a message from the Kaiser, which appointed Hindenburg Commander-in-Chief of all the German armies in the East. Ludendorff remained his Chief-of-Staff, and the leadership of the 9th Army was given to General von Mackensen. Hindenburg decided to make his Headquarters at Posen, but, on November 3rd, before leaving Czenstochau, the plans for the next part of the campaign were completed. There could be no question of leading an attack against the heavily-packed front line, for that would simply mean disaster. It must be directed against the poorly-protected flank. The position of the north wing of the enemy in the neighbourhood of Lodz was considered, and it was seen that the German attacking army would have to be brought as far as Thorn. The new march was planned to go to positions between Thorn and Gnesen, a fact which meant a very wide separation from the Austro-Hungarian

left wing. To enable the German advance to be carried out, Austria's leaders would have to withdraw four Infantry Divisions from the Carpathian front to take the place of the troops withdrawn from Czenstochau to the south.

This northward march divided the Eastern Armies into three groups. The first was composed of the Austro-Hungarian soldiers on both banks of the upper stretches of the Vistula, the second and third were, respectively, the 8th and 9th German Armies. It was impossible to fill the gaps. The area of over sixty miles which stretched between the Austrians and the 9th Army was filled with newly-formed troops. They were pathetically few in number as compared with their opposers, and were spread out over such a great distance that they could scarcely be described as a fighting-line. Hindenburg knew that by sheer force of numbers the Russians could force their way into Silesia at any time. Between the 9th Army at Thorn and the 8th Army in East Prussia was also a very small muster of troops—a few frontiersmen and a few reserves—against which four Army Corps of Russians were held in readiness to the north of Warsaw. It seemed possible that these troops could be moved forward so as to reproduce the situation which had existed before the battle of Tannenberg.

The 9th Army had therefore to beat the Russians on their flank, and it was plain that the blow must fall swiftly and surely, if this comparatively small force were to avoid annihilation by a concentrated attack on the part of the chief strength of the Russian Army. The 8th Army, in spite of its precarious position, was obliged to send two Army Corps to the 9th Army. Two Cavalry Divisions were brought from the Western Front, and the attacking force

was thus composed of five and a half Army Corps and five Cavalry Divisions. It was set into movement on November the 11th—not a moment too soon, for an enemy Marconi message revealed the fact that an attack, determined to penetrate into Germany, had been planned along the whole of the North-west Front. This was to have taken place on November 14th, but, on the 13th, the Russians became aware of the German attack and did not venture to carry out the intended blow against Silesia. Thus was one of the main hopes of Hindenburg—the saving of Silesia—for the moment fulfilled.

Meanwhile the 9th Army was engaged in the fiercest conflict which had yet been waged on the Eastern Front. Every inch of ground was savagely contested. The enemy numbers seemed to preclude all chance of a decisive victory, but Hindenburg still hoped for one. Alternately attacking and defending, surrounding and being surrounded, the Prussian army gave the utmost of its strength. The Russians could not advance against it, and it became clear that, for the time being, but little was to be feared. The question arose—Could Germany and Austria not only hold the hordes against them in check, but force them to return whence they came? Reinforcements were sent from the Western Front, but these troops, though brave and willing, had just come from the battle of Ypres. They were tired out, worn with the great struggle from which they had just come, and with the long journey to the East. Hindenburg determined to attempt to bring the Russian Army to retreat, but, as the reinforcements reached him only piecemeal and the troops opposing him were so great, it was impossible to do anything decisive. The Russians with-

drew their armies a short distance and they lay still, worn out by the long fighting. Then came an element which laid a paralysing grip on friend and foe alike. Winter, with its frost and snow, covered the countryside, and the guns to some extent were stilled. Russians and Germans lay in their encampments, and waited through the long, weary months. What would happen when the spring returned? At any rate, the German soldiers could rest content that they had done their duty and had indeed proved themselves worthy of the trust which their leader had placed in them.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IN SUPREME COMMAND

THE winter passed silently, except for certain small and localized activities, and it was Hindenburg's armies which started the battle again. In the Carpathians the Germans and Austrians had a terrible struggle, however, to keep the Hungarian country safe. Ludendorff had been obliged to pay a visit to this part of the line, and he returned with very serious news of the conditions there, and no little anxiety about the Austro-Slav Divisions of the Army. The need for decisive victory for Austria was not only a military but a political one. There was already unrest in the country and fear that the war might not end well. In addition, the attitude of Italy was such that the Austrians felt themselves insecure and that their troops were menaced from the rear. A great victory in the east was, therefore, a matter of daily increasing urgency.

At the beginning of 1915, four Army Corps, some from France and some from home, were placed at Hindenburg's disposal. These men were brought through the bitter weather in trains which for the most part were unheated, and disentrained in East Prussia. Some were sent to increase the strength of the 8th Army, and some were added to the 10th, under General von Eichhorn. Extra support was sent to both wings of the German front line from Lötzen to Gumbinnen. In the Headquarters at Posen, the place of action was prepared and discussed, and it was determined that the 10th Russian Army should be surrounded, that the two German flanking movements should

meet on Russian ground, and that as much as possible of the Russian fighting force should be destroyed.

On February 5th, from Insterburg, where Hindenburg and his Staff had moved to conduct the offensive, orders to attack were issued. On the 7th both wings started to move, and the circle widened and then swept closely round the enemy troops. Winter still held the land in its icy grip; the marching men had to suffer no little privation in the bitter cold. But they moved relentlessly onward and, on February 21st, the circle was completed. Hindenburg had once again lived up to his own saying: "Boldness coupled with caution." His manœuvre was completely successful. From this battle-ground, he was able to see once more the long, tattered columns of Russian prisoners passing to captivity. They numbered over 100,000. Many more lay dead upon the frozen fields. However, it was impossible for Hindenburg to follow up this blow immediately; to replace the lost men, thousands of fresh troops were brought up, released from parts of the line where they were not needed. The numbers of Russians were too great to permit an attempt to be made to annihilate another part of their army. Savage battles were fought, which ended mostly on Russian ground. War raged starkly in the Carpathians, where the Russians endeavoured, even through the winter, to force their way over the Hungarian frontier. It seemed to the Russians that success in this undertaking would be a decisive moment in the whole war, and it appeared as if Austria could never survive so awful a blow.

The situation was grave in the extreme, but the German High Command found a way out of the danger. At the beginning of May the Russian force in North Galicia was

broken through and the enemy front on the Hungarian frontier was successfully attacked in the flank and in the rear. Hindenburg's share in this work was indirect. He was instructed to engage the enemy forces which might have otherwise been released and sent to the Carpathian front. Accordingly, he attacked the Russians to the west of Warsaw and at the East Prussian frontier. On April 27th a cavalry force was sent into Kurland and Lithuania. Three Cavalry divisions, supported by Infantry, threatened the chief railway lines which were the principal communications of the Russian Army. To prevent disaster, the enemy sent strong forces to this part of the line, but the battle in Lithuania continued until the summer. More German troops were sent thither to hold the occupied territory; and little by little the German Niemen Army was thus created.

Gradually the front extended and blazed into action. The southern part of the Russian front was pressed back. The northern pressed a strong flank between the Vistula and the swamp district. The plans for another great attack began to take shape. Should this new offensive, which would press forward from East Prussia, pass to the east or the west of the Bobr swamp district? The High Command decided that the westerly direction was the better. The attack was ordered to pass across the lower reaches of the Narew. The Army under Gallwitz swept down upon the Narew, and Hindenburg went personally into the battle-field. He remained with the Army for two days and witnessed the capture of the town of Przasnysz. On the 17th of July, Gallwitz's Army reached the Narew. Once again faced with the possibility of being encircled, the

Russians began, little by little, to withdraw along the whole line of battle. But, as Hindenburg says, the fruits of victory could not be gathered in the pursuit of the retiring hordes, but would be reaped in full measure if an attack were pressed towards Wilna, to force the Russian centre back upon the swamps and to cut off their lines of communication. The High Command, however, ordered pursuit. At this time, the fortress of Nowo Georgiewsk fell into the hands of the Germans, a matter of strategic importance because the railway between Mława and Warsaw passed through it.

On the 18th of August Hindenburg met the Kaiser and drove in his train through the recently captured town. It presented a dreary spectacle, for the Russians had carried out a very wholesale destruction before they had made surrender. The barracks were still in flames. Large groups of prisoners were being shepherded together. Everything which could have proved of use to the Germans had been destroyed ; all the horses had been shot. Hindenburg bears testimony to the astonishing thoroughness with which the Russians destroyed what they could no longer hold.

In July the German Niemen Army was moved eastwards. In the middle of August, Kowno was captured by the 10th Army. But there were never a sufficient number of troops to enable the German leader to carry out his ideas. It was only possible to pursue and embarrass the retreating Russians. On the 9th of September a move was made upon Wilna, the way having been cleared by the Niemen Army in July. Hindenburg was filled with apprehension. Perhaps this undertaking would be crowned with another enormous

success, perhaps there would be more long green-grey lines of prisoners—but perhaps the move had been made too late. Over Wilna to the south came the German Army; but the Russians were aware of the danger that threatened their communications. The battles round Wilna were waged with the fury of men who saw themselves trapped. Every passing moment meant a degree of safety for the Russians. The German Cavalry Divisions, which had hoped to lay hands upon the railway, were beaten back. This time the plan failed. The blow had been struck too late, and the magnificent fighting spirit of the German troops had not availed to save the day.

In October, 1915, Hindenburg removed his Headquarters to Kowno. The winter of 1915-1916 was much quieter, and Hindenburg was able to hunt now and then and to enjoy sleighing runs through the whitened countryside. The soldiers employed their leisure, in many divisions, by the editing of trench newspapers, and some of them published stories about their Commander-in-Chief.

One of these refers to Hindenburg's well-known objection to road blocks, which were the subject of constant anxiety to Divisional Chiefs. If Hindenburg's car happened to appear upon the scene and was held up for any reason, there was always trouble for some one. The commandant of a frontier town was therefore occasioned no little distress when he saw a solid block of sheep trotting along the road for which he was responsible. He was hoping to be able to drive the animals away, and praying that the great man might not pass down the road, when the horn of Hindenburg's car was heard. But, on this occasion, the General was in excellent humour. Catching sight of the trembling

Commandant, he observed pleasantly, "Well, Colonel! I have just seen your *élite* troops, going down the road!" The unfortunate started to make some excuse, when Hindenburg spoke again, "Don't worry," he remarked kindly; "they were in excellent marching order!" And the car rolled on, while the Commandant sighed his relief.

Once, during the winter, Hindenburg went to the woods of Augustow to shoot wolves, but, as he relates, the wolves kept away and the expedition proved vain. There were, by this time, few traces left of the ghastly struggles that had taken place in the past summer and autumn. Trenches still stood, but, for the most part, the battle-grounds had been cleared.

Although the winter was quieter so far as actual fighting was concerned, Ludendorff and Hindenburg had a colossal task on their shoulders in caring for the supplying of the armies with food, with winter clothing and other necessities, and the preserving of good feeling between the soldiers and the civil population. Ludendorff identified himself very closely with all this organization work, and was given an absolutely free hand by Hindenburg, who never interfered with any colleague or subordinate who carried out his work with competence and good faith.

At Kowno, in April, 1916, Hindenburg completed the fiftieth year of his military service. This was the occasion of a little celebration, but, as the fighting had broken out again in March, Hindenburg had little time to give to matters personal. Anxiety lay heavily upon him, for not only had he to think about the military situation, but he had to ensure that his troops were preserved from the twin enemies of hunger and disease. Though the winter of

1915-1916 was considerably quieter, yet hostilities kept breaking out at various parts of the line, and it was quite impossible to connect these with any definite plan. Hindenburg considered the districts round Smorgon Dunaburg and Riga as danger points for the Germans, because the chief Russian railways passed through them. Just in these parts, however, no signs of Russian activity were manifested.

On March 18th, the Russian attack was launched, precisely where it was not expected, at Lake Narocz and at Postawy. One hundred and twenty-eight Russian battalions were hurled against nineteen German battalions, a most intense barrage upon the German positions preparing the way for the attack. Conditions in the German trenches were appalling: the few troops were standing, in some places, breast-high in icy water. Thaw had set in and the field was nothing but a swamp. The breastwork of the trenches started to flow away in mud, rendering the discomfort of the men more acute than ever. They withstood the barrage, and encountered with a ceaseless fire the murderous onslaughts of the Russian hosts. Wave after wave of enemy soldiers replaced those slain; the dead lay in heaps before the German lines. And still the few held fast, refused to be driven back. The attack wavered at last and broke. The Russians were beaten once more, and the few heroic troops stood victors, this time on the shores of the Narocz Lake. The Russian losses were estimated at 140,000.

And now news from the Western Battle Front began to clamour for attention. Would the German Armies there succeed in capturing Verdun? The word "Italy," too, was heard on many lips, and the plan for an Austro-

Hungarian attack upon that country was discussed, together with its chances of success. The plan was a bold one—but how was it to be carried out? If the flower of the Austro-Hungarian Army were to attack Italy, what would be the result upon the Eastern frontier? How, then, were the Russians to be held in check? Reports of victories came from the Italian front, but Hindenburg viewed the situation with doubt and distress, and, before long, his fears were justified.

On June 4th the Austro-Hungarian troops gave before the Russian attack in the districts of Wolhynien and in Bukowina. "This time," writes Hindenburg, "there was no victorious German Army at hand to save the situation; in the west the battle raged round Verdun and signs of storm were threatening from the Somme."

A small piece of fortune was now vouchsafed. The Russian attack did not re-descend upon the German troops, and they were hurried to the help of their Allies, so far as they could be spared. One part of the Austrian front, consisting of German, Austrian and Hungarian troops, held fast under the leadership of General Graf Bothmer. The Germans from East Prussia were entrained and carried south to the battle-fields of Galicia. And, at this time, bad news of a threatened breakdown of the German Army in France came through to depress the leaders in the east. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were twice called to Pless to consult with the Kaiser at his Headquarters. The Austrians had been forced to accede to a condition in return for the help accorded to them from East Prussia. Hindenburg's command, by this condition, was extended east of Lemberg, and strong Austro-Hungarian forces were submitted to his

orders. Hindenburg visited his new command at the earliest possible moment, and found there "a willingness to meet him and an unreserved criticism of their own weakness." A strong hand was needed to deal with the army of mixed nationalities, and Hindenburg moved his Headquarters to Brest-Litowsk. There, on August 28th, he received an urgent summons from the Kaiser to come immediately to General Headquarters. "The position was serious." In addition to all the clouds with which Germany was beset, still another had arisen. Rumania made her declaration of war.

On August 29th, Hindenburg reached Pless, in company with his Chief of Staff. He expected that he would be called upon to express his views and to discuss plans with the Kaiser. What actually happened was that he was now appointed Chief of the General Staff of the German Armies, while Ludendorff was made First Quartermaster-General. In the space of two years, the former Infantry General was promoted first to the Command of the Army and then to the Chieftainship of the fighting forces of the whole nation. His predecessor, General von Falkenhayn, gave him his hand in farewell. "God help you and our Fatherland," he said.

The position was, indeed, serious. Verdun had not been taken, and the Battle of the Somme had not been settled to Germany's advantage. Their hopes had not entirely faded, but they were poor.

In the southern part of the Carpathians the Russians were pushing forward, and it was a matter of doubt whether the Hungarian boundary line could be held. Owing to the failure of their armies in Galicia, the Austro-Hungarian

attack in South Tyrol had to be abandoned, while the Italians were advancing, though the outnumbered opposing troops exhibited the greatest heroism. Bulgaria was in difficulties and Rumania had entered the war. Everywhere the enemy forces seemed to have the upper hand, and the German and Austro-Hungarian reserves were very few. To the unfavourable military situation, the bad conditions at home were beginning to add no little weight. That most terrible enemy of all—hunger—stalked amid the ranks of the non-combatants, who were besides disheartened by the bad news which came from all the fronts. Men, women and children were faced with starvation, and although Hindenburg writes that there was as yet no reason to suppose the population would not hold out, still there was cause for anxiety. The patience of hungry people is notoriously small. It was not only in Germany, but also in Austria that food shortage was beginning to be seriously felt.

Political and home affairs are not, except indirectly, the business of a Commander-in-Chief, but such was the general situation at the time when Hindenburg took over the highest post which the Army had to offer, and it is certain that the knowledge of the bad conditions at home played their part in his mind.

It was obvious that there must be a union between the leaders of the armies on the different fronts, and so Hindenburg, acting for the *Oberste Kriegsleitung*, was given the power to make agreements with the leaders of the German allies.

Pless, a small town in Upper Silesia, had been decided upon as a suitable spot for General Headquarters, because

it was near the town of Teschen, where the Austrian Headquarters had been set up. During the time which Hindenburg spent at Pless, he met most of the chief political and military personalities of Germany and her allies. King Ferdinand of Bulgaria was one of those who most deeply impressed the Field-Marshal, who regarded his political and diplomatic qualities as brilliant. "His political glance," writes Hindenburg of this monarch, "went far beyond the boundaries of the Balkans. He perfectly understood how to turn the great political questions of the world to the account of his own country and to push it into the foreground."

On the eve of November, 1916, the Emperor of Austria died, and his death was an irreparable blow not only to his own country but to Germany. The young emperor Charles was not the man to wrestle with a situation which was already nearly hopeless. He removed Conrad from the command of the Austrian Armies on the Eastern Frontier and put in his place General von Arz, a man of only moderate abilities. Conrad's successes had been few and inconspicuous, but this was due rather to ill-fortune than to anything else. His star had not been a lucky one, but his performance under the worst possible conditions had been more than creditable. His successor was inactive and also without any considerable powers of leadership, and he was certainly no substitute for the tireless and able Conrad. Well might Hindenburg say: "With the honoured, grey-haired Emperor, a large part of the national conscience of this country of many races sank almost into the grave." The efforts of the Emperor Charles to reconcile the different sections of his people failed completely.

At Pless, too, in 1916, Hindenburg met Enver Pasha, the military leader of Turkey, and General Jekoff of Bulgaria. Enver Pasha impressed Hindenburg as a man of clear sight and decision. When asked by the German leader for a description of the situation in Turkey, he replied with an amazing clarity and certainty. "The position of Turkey in Asia," he said, "is to some extent very difficult. We must fear a possibility that we shall be thrown further back in Armenia. It is also not impossible that the battles in Irak will soon break out again. Also, I believe that the English will soon be in a position to attack us through Syria with larger forces than we have. But whatever may happen in Asia, the decision of the war will be reached upon European ground, and for this I place all my available Divisions at your disposal."

General Jekoff of Bulgaria, however, was another type of man. "He was," writes Hindenburg, "not without sober powers of observation and was capable of great thoughts," but it is also plain that he was a soldier firstly, a soldier secondly, and a soldier thirdly. That is to say, he had limitations. His men had an extravagant admiration for him, and his trust in their fighting ability was almost fantastic. Once, some one suggested that these soldiers might hesitate to confront the Russians, and his emphatic reply was: "If I tell my Bulgarians they are to fight, they will do so—let it be against whom it may!"

Hindenburg did not meet at Pless only the military chiefs of the German allies, but also their political leaders. Talaat Pasha seems to have impressed him very deeply as a man of great gifts. He was fully aware of the enormous difficulties of his position, but, as Hindenburg says, no

statesman can correct in a few months that which has been neglected for centuries. The country had no national feeling, and though the victories at the Dardanelles served to give it some little national pride for a time, the past black centuries really held the upper hand.

Such were the leading personalities of the countries allied with Germany, and with these Hindenburg was empowered to discuss and carry out means and measures.

CHAPTER NINE

WEARYING WAR YEARS

ON August 27th, Rumania declared war on Austria, and on August 28th on Germany, and five armies took the field. Mackensen's army started operations against Rumania on September 5th, and completely routed their opponents.

The 9th German Army was also brought to Rumania, but it was badly delayed by the Hungarians who offered passive resistance and whose traffic officials increased by deliberate incompetence the inefficiency of the railway service. In the middle of November this army forced its way into the mountains. Intense frost and increasing storms, the scarcity of roads and the resistance offered by a brave enemy were again contended against and overcome by the Germans. Bucarest was occupied on December the 6th, but it was out of the question to attempt with so few men to dislodge the enemy from his strong positions in the mountains. The Rumanian army, with French support, undertook a useless attack upon Mackensen's army in July, 1917. A few localized actions took place, but were without importance, and an armistice with Rumania was concluded in December, 1917.

The difficulties which the German leaders were called upon to face in 1916 were greatly sharpened by the action of Sarrail's army on the Macedonian Front. The Bulgarians, who had exhibited the greatest valour in attack, weakened under the artillery fire to which they were then subjected. They were driven from the positions previously won, and supports had to be hurried to their aid—supports which

had been destined for Rumania. Turkey also hurried to the assistance of Bulgaria with a whole Army Corps. But Hindenburg writes : " These supports were not welcomed by Bulgaria, because she feared that as a result of accepting them, undesired Turkish claims might be made in the sphere of politics. Enver Pasha, however, assured us that he would prevent any such developments." The retreat of the Bulgarian army was not regarded as a disaster by Hindenburg, because the general situation of the Bulgarian soldiers was rather improved by retirement upon stronger positions, while that of their enemy was rendered more difficult.

Hindenburg, whose pride in the German Army was almost boundless, in his memoirs compares the qualities of the Bulgarian and German soldiers.

" . . . The Bulgarians had stood for the first time in difficult positions to be defended. Although the previous news of our officers had always praised the magnificent spirit of Bulgarian soldiers in attack, now a certain sensitiveness was revealed when they had to face continuous enemy artillery fire. . . . An impression is made that modern methods of attack, with their nerve-destroying results, demand for purposes of defence in addition to inherent strength, a factor which can only be given by a high cultivation of will power. The proper mixture of *moral* and bodily strength seems to exist in the principal part of our German soldiery."

No one who is disposed to regard the deeds of the German Army during four years of war with an unpreju-

diced eye, will be disposed to dispute the Field-Marshal's words.

Hindenburg, as Chief of the German Armies, had now to turn his attention to the East. What was the position there in the year 1916? The Russian offensive in Armenia, which had been anxiously watched by Germany, came suddenly to a stop. The attempted offensive against the left wing of this Russian advance failed completely. The difficult country through which it had to make its way and the seeming hopelessness of setting up proper communications made it impossible to move forward. In addition, the early descent of winter rendered it likely that Russia would try before the cold weather set in to reach a final decision.

The Turkish armies in the Caucasus were in a terrible condition. It was not enough that they had fought and bled and that there were many killed and wounded. Other privations were added to the usual miseries of war. Food, which reached them with difficulty, was insufficient, and the men had not proper clothing. The barest necessities were carried to their positions not by trains or by beasts of burden, but by women and children. Hundreds of these died by the wayside, for they had not the stamina for the long marches of many days' duration. In Irak, Kut-el-Amara had been taken, but Hindenburg had no reason to think that its loss would be quietly accepted by the English, and he did not believe that the Turks were strong enough to resist the attack when it came. He advised that the forces there should be strengthened. But Turkey, "for political reasons," sent an Army Corps to Persia instead. Well might Hindenburg deplore that the sphere of politics influenced military considerations for the bad. In Palestine,

the outlook was bleak. The Turkish troops had failed in August, 1916, in the second attack upon the Suez Canal. By degrees they had been forced back upon Gaza. The English were constructing a railway from Egypt, and it seemed that it would not be long before the Turks would again be attacked. Hindenburg wondered, not without apprehension, what effect the loss of Jerusalem would be likely to have upon his Allies of the Crescent. In Syria, as in the Caucasus, the Turkish troops suffered terribly from lack of proper communication lines. Crops failed, and there was a scarcely veiled hostility to be faced from the Arabs.

Many considerations tempted Hindenburg to increase the numbers of troops in Mesopotamia and Syria. In unguarded moments he dreamed great dreams of Empire, such dreams as come to every military leader, but he knew them to be fantastic, and put them from him. How it might be possible to push forces through Syria to Egypt, or to threaten India through Persia and Afghanistan, were questions that came into his mind. They were but chimerical fancies, for, if it were not possible to feed and clothe even the small forces in Mesopotamia and Syria, what would happen to greater armies? They would perish of thirst and famine. It was impossible, under these conditions, to try and plan such ventures.

Meanwhile the fearful battles raged round Verdun and on the Somme. Because there were insufficient German troops, Hindenburg could not organize attacks for the relief of the men engaged on these great slaughter-grounds. He had not long taken over the Command of the Armies when he felt compelled to recommend the Kaiser to give

orders to cease attacks upon Verdun. The losses which these attacks were causing Germany were so serious that they seemed like a bleeding artery in the body of the country ; and the blood was precious, the waning strength would be hard to renew. The name " Verdun " had the same sound as the word " Hell " in the ears of the German soldiery. The people at home, however, waited and watched for news of the capture of Verdun, news which would mean that the many sacrificed lives had not been laid down in vain. The nerves of the non-combatant population were strained almost to breaking point, and Hindenburg wished to save them from the fearful reaction that would certainly follow upon the publication of unfavourable news. He hoped, too, that when German attacks ceased, the French would content themselves with purely defensive measures. In this he was mistaken, for, in October, they made their swift attack along the east bank of the river Meuse. The Germans were unable to withstand it, and Douaumont fell. The attack was preceded by an artillery fire which broke down what little strength remained to the German troops. In the month of December the struggle round Verdun was brought to a close—the French had triumphed. All the world knows the history of the Somme, and how the fierce and wearying months went by, taking their toll on both sides. Hindenburg directs some criticism against the Commanders of the Allied Armies, which is certainly justified. In his *Aus meinem Leben* he writes :

“ If our Western opponents were not able to achieve a decisive victory in the campaigns of 1915-17, this

must chiefly be attributed to a certain partiality on the part of their leaders. The enemy certainly did not lack the necessary numbers of men, apparatus and ammunition ; and one cannot say that the opposing troops were not good enough to respond to the requirements of an active and skilful leadership. In addition, our Western enemy had at his disposal well-developed railway and road communications and also everything needful for the best possible development of a much greater freedom to operate. The opposing leaders did not make the fullest use of these. That we were able to hold out so long was certainly due, in addition of course to other considerations, to a certain unfruitfulness of the ground upon which the enemy plans ripened. In spite of this, however, the demands which were made upon our leaders and upon our men on those battlefields were monstrous."

In September, well aware that he must immediately acquaint himself with the position on the Western Front, Hindenburg visited it in company with Ludendorff. On the way, they were joined by the Kaiser and the Crown Prince. Hindenburg refers constantly to the pleasantness of his relations with his monarch and to the excellence of his military judgments. At Cambrai, Hindenburg, at the command of the Kaiser, handed over the Prussian Field-Marshal's batons to the heirs to the thrones of Bavaria and Wurtemberg. This ceremony was followed by a prolonged conference with the Army leaders of the Western Front. The principal troubles were the inferior numbers of the German aeroplanes and artillery and lack of ammunition

as taken in comparison with those possessed by the opponents.

Hindenburg was deeply struck with what he saw of the conditions on the Somme. Here were men who had never experienced a single moment of "soldiers' good fortune," whose war horizon consisted of trenches and shell-holes, and in whose ears the sound of artillery bombardment rang incessantly. Their whole duty had been simply to stay where they were, to hold on to the last ounce of their strength and, if necessary, beyond it. Hindenburg knew only too well the value of a successful offensive to the *moral* of soldiers and the daily sapping of the strength of will and body which a long, eventless defence must always occasion. He fully understood that both officers and men pined to escape from these awful conditions, but, he writes, "many of our best and enthusiastic soldiers had to shed their heart's blood in broken trenches" before the day for the attack dawned. At last the savageness of the battle of the Somme became somewhat less, for the rainy season set in. The ground became like a quagmire and the shell-holes filled with water. Neither the Germans nor their enemies could talk of victory; and both sides only lay wearily under the grey skies and splashed their ways about in the soaking trenches. Even now, however, there was no complete stillness, for the guns still thundered sullenly and the name "Somme" began to sound as evilly in soldiers' ears as the name "Verdun."

CHAPTER TEN
THE WAR DRAGS ON

WITH his acceptance of the highest post in the Army, Hindenburg was obliged to occupy himself to some extent with questions relating to politics. His skill and clear sight in all military questions, however complicated these might be, and his patience in working out every detail with due thoroughness, were qualities which he was unable to carry into the realm of politics. And he hated diplomacy. There is evidence of asperity and of some lack of understanding in his own writings on the subject. "The ins and outs of all these countless political questions and counter-questions only brought me uncomfortable hours and increased my dislike of politics."

The first of these questions with which Hindenburg had to concern himself was the question of Polish independence. In the resurrection of Poland, he saw some dangers to Germany. The Austrians thought to attach the Catholic districts of Poland to themselves but, in August, 1916, the Germans and Austrians came to an agreement in Vienna, by which they decided to make Poland an independent Kingdom as soon as possible. General von Falkenhayn, however, who had succeeded Hindenburg as Commander of the Eastern Front, raised prompt objection to this agreement, and the Kaiser supported him. That the agreement had been made, however, could not be concealed for ever, and it was soon a matter of common discussion. The Governor-General of Warsaw, therefore, soon after Hindenburg's acceptance of the High Command, demanded

that Poland be immediately proclaimed a Kingdom and offered support to the German Army by means of the introduction of conscription. Hindenburg, in view of the pressing need for such support, was willing to use his influence to set up Poland as a Kingdom, but he and those who thought like him were opposed by the Government. There was some possibility of being able to come to terms with Russia, and it was feared that the Czar and his Ministers would be offended if such a step were taken.

While planning out the Rumanian campaign, Hindenburg was approached with regard to a peace settlement; he met this with a strong, even a passionate approval, although he had small hopes that it would be successful. He gave his full attention to the details of the peace offer, but was determined that "neither the Army nor the country should suffer through it." The Kaiser, he writes, was convinced that the offer could not fail entirely, and on December 12th, the allied countries were informed of Germany's willingness to make peace. The offer was rejected, and was followed by President Wilson's attempt to bring peace into the world. At last came the fatal day in February, 1917, when Germany handed in to America her conditions for peace, accompanied by her Declaration of Unlimited U Boat War. The result was America's Declaration of War on Germany, and certain South American States followed her lead. Germany stood finally opposed to 28 countries—three-quarters of the world were at war with her.

Home politics also pressed for attention, and Hindenburg worked out his great War Industry Programme. In this, as he says himself, his chief care was to ensure that the

fighting forces received what they needed. All other considerations were subordinated to this primary one. The programme was sharply criticized by post-war politicians and thinkers. Hindenburg writes :

“After the war it was said that this programme was dictated by a distracted mind. The phrase-maker who used this expression was completely in error with regard to the spirit in which this programme was conceived.”

Hindenburg kept his head in every emergency ; here and there he may have made mistakes, but such mistakes were never the result of “distracted mind.” In his long service with the Army in wartime and in peace, his instincts and his early training served to keep him true to his course. Even in the wildest tumults and storms, he never allowed himself to drift rudderless upon the sea of despair.

He now threw himself with all his ardour into the putting through of the *Kriegshilfsdienst** law. He wished to see not only all men who could possibly hold arms, but all men who were capable of work at all, and also women, placed at the disposal of their country. At this stage of the war he must have seen disaster coming, but he was determined that the country—if fall it must—should go down fighting to the last ditch. Every group and faculty must be prepared to give its help to the last ounce. Perhaps he thought that a gigantic effort might still save the situation. But here he was doomed to disappointment. “The final form of the law was a different and far more modest one from that which I had conceived. . . . The law was

*War Aid Service.



E.N.A.

HINDENBURG WITH THE KAISER AND LUDENDORFF AT GENERAL HEADQUARTERS DURING THE WAR.

finally based upon the ground of home political commercial considerations, and not upon the deeply rooted spirit of the whole Fatherland."

The makers of this law were bitterly reproached that they had placed the country in an economical and social situation which was to no small extent responsible for the Revolution. Certain it is that, in spite of regulations fixing the maximum prices of many daily necessities, the merchants who dealt in these goods found means to evade the rules. These wares were simply withdrawn from the open market and were only to be obtained by those who had the money to pay the exorbitant prices demanded. Those who could pay had plenty in their larders, but the large mass of the middle classes suffered the bitterest need. Starvation and all the diseases which hunger brings in its train had to be faced. It was small wonder that the despairing population began to murmur threateningly. The halo which had shone around the soldiers at the beginning of the war was now sadly tarnished; the Army began to lose its romance in the eyes of the dispirited people.

In addition to the pressing food trouble, there was, owing to lack of raw material, insufficient clothing in the country. The needs of the soldiers had to be met, and soon it was necessary to issue clothing coupons. Upon the wealthier classes was laid the duty of giving away what they could spare from their wardrobes, but, as may well be imagined, there were many such who did not respond readily to the demands made.

The *Kriegshilfsdienst* Law gave many opportunities to the conscienceless profiteer to enrich himself. Many thousands

of people lived in plenty and indifference while the soldiers hungered and died on the battle fronts, and the middle classes starved and murmured. There was soon a dangerous gap between the Army and the population, which it seemed hopeless to try and bridge. Hindenburg had hoped that this law would weld the country into a great home army, working as vigorously as the men at the fronts were fighting, for the common weal of the Fatherland. In fact, it never came into being as he conceived it.

The Kaiser and the Government were too much occupied with the soldiers to see the fearful precipice towards which their home management was leading them. They forgot that wars are not won solely in the field, and they did not fully realize the need for a strong, properly-organized home policy. The reins of State lay idly in their hands, and they placed all their hopes upon the Army and upon the result which an unlimited U-boat warfare was likely to have upon England. Some result it certainly had, for food had to be rationed, but no real need arose such as was experienced in Germany. Even a population which was hungry, had it only been tactfully and strongly led, might not have fallen into revolution.

The year 1917 dawned, and Hindenburg knew what he had to expect from the Allied Armies. An attack would certainly be made all along the line and it was essential that the powers of resistance of the German Army should be increased to the largest possible extent. To Hindenburg it did not seem likely that the mistakes made by the Allied leaders in 1916 would be repeated, and he longed to be able to surprise them before their attacks could be launched. He had neither the troops nor the materials which such a

surprise required, and the end of 1916 had found Germany in a well-nigh hopeless condition. In the summer of 1916 the Serbian Army had reappeared on the scene of war, and it must be mentioned that its ranks were increased by many deserters of Slavonic race from the Austro-Hungarian Army.

Many people might speak of the "fortunes of war" and of "the chances of war," but to Hindenburg such phrases seemed as idle and empty as the wind. Chance, he considered to play a negligible part. Long after the war, he wrote :

"I saw in the war's course and result, even when the latter went against us, an inexorable procession of logical facts. Whoever attacks and is in a position to attack, has success on his side; whoever omits, or is obliged to omit, an attack, loses."

Threatening as the position on the West Front was for Germany, Hindenburg was obliged to admit to himself that an even greater danger was to be feared in the East from the hordes of Russia. The *moral* in the Austro-Hungarian Army was such that he dared not remove the German supports which had been accorded to this ally ; and it even seemed likely that this would have to be increased. German officers in Macedonia were using their influence and their experience gained on other battle fronts to spread the right spirit throughout the Bulgarian Army, but Hindenburg had to reckon with the probable need of having to send supports also to this country.

On the Somme, Hindenburg felt that the situation might

be saved by an attack, and he considered ways and means, but again he had to come to the conclusion that an attack at this part of the line would be too great a risk. After the months of bitter fighting that had occurred here, the German line, along a length of about thirty miles, had been forced to yield up a depth of about six miles of country. This allied success had been accompanied by appalling losses on both sides, and Germany was recruiting her losses from an underfed population. Hindenburg decided against attack and in favour of retreat, and the men were therefore withdrawn to the line through Arras, St. Quentin and Soissons. The withdrawal started on March 16th, 1917, and the allied troops pursued cautiously over the once fair countryside. The position now taken up was known as the *Siegfriedlinie*,* and the shortened front line improved the conditions under which the German Army fought. Strong reserves were brought up, and Hindenburg considered the question of attacking the Allies with some of these fresh troops; he felt safer as he realized that he had now so disposed of his soldiers that he could attack weak spots in the opposing line at any moment.

The decision to retire upon the *Siegfriedlinie* had only been taken after long and anxious discussion. Its probable effect upon the men who had fought so desperately to hold the ground now yielded up was likely to be depressing—its effect upon the civil population which had waited so long and vainly for tidings of victory was likely even to be dangerous; but Hindenburg risked giving for the moment the upper hand to the enemy, in order to improve conditions for the Army.

* Siegfried Line.

General von Conrad had suggested at the end of 1916 that a great attack should be made upon Italy where, he believed, with some help from Germany, there was a good chance of decisive victory and an enforced peace with at least one of the opposing powers. He stressed the improvement which such a victory would bring to the state of the Austrian soldiers. Hindenburg, however, refused his consent to such a scheme. He pointed out that even defeat would probably not force Italy into making peace and that her complete overthrow would never be tolerated by the Allied Armies. England, especially, would hasten to help her, and German supports were needed for other and more urgent work.

Bulgaria, too, was eager to attack the Allies in Macedonia, where she saw possibilities of forcing the enemy to vacate that country, and she directed a hungry gaze upon Salonica. But Hindenburg had objections here, too. "Had we forced the *Entente* troops to vacate Macedonia," he writes, "we should have had them hurled upon us at the Western Front." And the Bulgarians "quite rightly" did not feel able to carry out any successful attack without the support of at least six German Divisions, which Hindenburg was not prepared to send to their aid.

Turkey was in a bad way. All that Germany could ask her to do was to defend herself and engage the forces that stood over against her, that they might not also be added to the numbers against which Germany was contending. In August, 1916, she was warned to withdraw her ill-fed armies from the Armenian mountains that they might not be obliged to suffer the privations of winter; but the necessary orders were given too late. These Turkish

forces were almost entirely disintegrated by the sufferings they underwent. Intense cold descended upon them and they had not even the necessary clothing. The food columns, themselves unable to cope with the dreadful conditions, were not regular with their scanty supplies. The Turks died by hundreds, not upon the field of honour and not contending with a foe against whom they had some chance, but of inexorable cold and of starvation. And there was none to help them in that wild, depopulated district. "No song," writes Hindenburg, "no Roll of Honour will ever relate their tragic end."

In March, 1917, came an event which at that moment was not looked for. The Russian Revolution broke out, and it seemed that this was the opportunity for a German offensive against her Eastern enemy. The news was received with dismay by the Allies, and the greatest possible influence was brought to bear upon the new leaders to oblige them to hold the German troops upon the Eastern front. Somehow this had to be achieved until American soldiers could be brought to France.

Germany hoped for rest and it was at first disappointed. Kerensky held his front and there were attacks against the whole line. In the north Germany held out, but the Austro-Hungarian troops were able to stand against the enemy only in those positions where they received German help. At Stanislau, indeed, the Russians, broke through, but they did not follow up their victory. Meanwhile powerful influences were at work behind the Russian armies. Many men deserted because they were anxious about their homes and families and wished to secure themselves. Further, there were murmurs about the

extent of the losses along the front lines. No one knew how many millions of men had laid down their lives—there was a movement against war. Finally, while Kerensky tried in vain to break the Austro-Hungarian line which had been reinforced by Germany, the German counter-attack was launched on July 19th against Tarnopol. It was brilliantly successful. Kerensky's troops broke and fled; the whole Russian attack was disorganized. The army advanced as far as possible, but the Russians had destroyed the railway lines, which made communication a matter of grave difficulty. For the Army it seemed too dangerous to attempt to reach Petersburg; but there remained the Navy. Threatened from their northern coast, and with a victorious German Army in their country, the Russians forsook their last attempts to defy this determined foe. They requested an armistice in November, 1917.

In Irak the English took Bagdad and the Turks had been defeated at Berseba and Gaza, which defeats were followed by the loss of Jerusalem.

On the Western Front, the newly-arranged German front line was strengthened as far as possible. January, February and March, 1917, passed with comparative quietness, but the month of April reopened the hostilities. On the 9th, the British attacked at Arras, the way having first been prepared by a great barrage. The British attack swept over the German defences, and carried the positions. The Germans lost many guns; their reserves failed to stand against the British, or else broke down after heroic resistance. Hindenburg was faced with another crisis. As had happened before, the British

leaders did not make the fullest possible use of their victory, and this fact Hindenburg describes as "a ray of light among the many shadows of the evening of April 9th." The period of distraction did not last long. Hindenburg knew that fresh troops were already marching to the scene and that others were being brought by the railways. At the end of the conference Hindenburg shook Ludendorff's hand with the words: "Well, we have gone through worse things together than this affair of to-day." At Soissons, the French attack, which had also started with prolonged artillery fire, was thrown back. The battle at Arras, at Soissons and round Reims was fought out savagely for many weeks and the *Entente* had no further important success. Hindenburg's group system of defence answered the purpose for which it was designed, and the crisis was again overcome.

To the north-west of Lille, however, upon the Messines ridge, the British started another attack. The artillery fire was severe and the defending troops suffered more heavily than had ever been the case on previous occasions. The Commanders of the Army suggested it would be best to evacuate the ridge without further contest, but the occupying troops sent back the answer: "We shall hold out—we are still standing firmly." English sappers had been at work, however, and mines had been laid. On the 7th of June, the ground broke under the feet of the German soldiers, and the British attack overcame the last of their resistance. Desperate efforts were made by reserves to retrieve the day, but the artillery fire was such that these could achieve no success. The German losses here were terrible, and included, in addition to many

valuable lives, a large number of guns and other equipment.

The Autumn of 1917 caused Hindenburg to change his mind about allowing a strong attack to be made upon Italy, and he influenced the Kaiser to give his consent. The time was no more favourable to Germany than it had been the previous year; it was, in fact, more than ever a fearful risk to withdraw troops from the Western front and send them to the support of Austria. What, then, made the Field-Marshal reconsider his former decision? Simply that the Austrians had no longer the strength to resist another and expected Italian offensive, and they told Hindenburg that their front would certainly give way when this came. And, if this front gave way, the complete disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Army was threatened. The troops had fought with enthusiasm against Italy, their hereditary enemy; even men of Czecho-Slovakian race (who had been disinclined to fight Russia) did their utmost against Italy. Everything, however, had been in vain; they had been forced back upon their defences so far that the town Trieste was in danger of falling. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the value laid upon Trieste by the Austrians and its importance to their trade, and it is not difficult to imagine the despair with which they appealed to Hindenburg to save it. "Trieste," writes Hindenburg, "had to be saved, and, as it was not otherwise possible, by German troops." It must be remembered that the Austrians were outnumbered by almost three to one and that they had been fighting under conditions which Hindenburg describes as being, in some ways, even more miserable than those against which the armies in France

had to contend. In the Tyrolean Alps, these soldiers had heroically borne the brunt of bitter fighting.

Hindenburg could not spare sufficient troops to enable the tactics of encircling the Italians following a sudden descent from the South Tyrol; and he feared also that an early winter might set in before the troops could be brought from France and marched to the scene of action. It was therefore decided to strike against the weak north flank of Cadorna's troops and then to deliver an irresistible blow to the main southern part of the Italian Army. On the 24th of October the German offensive started and was carried out with brilliant success. Cadorna, it is true, was able to bring the main part of his army to safety behind the river Piave; but he was obliged to abandon much equipment, and large numbers of prisoners fell into the hands of the Germans. English and French troops were rushed to the spot and a new resistance was now offered. Cadorna, supported by English and French Divisions, placed his left wing upon the Venetian Alps, and an attempt by the Germans and Austrians to dislodge them from their positions and to break the resistance of the Italians by the Piave came to nothing. Hindenburg, who had to some extent allowed himself to hope for the destruction of the Italian Army, and who rejoiced at the considerable success of his soldiers, confessed nevertheless to a feeling of dissatisfaction. The great victory had not been achieved.

“It is true that our wonderful soldiers had returned with justified pride from this campaign. But the joy of the soldiers is not always that of their leaders.”

At the end of July, the battle in Flanders started again in

all its fury. The British attacked with that dogged determination which the Germans had grown to expect from them. Hindenburg refers constantly to English *Zähigkeit*,* and he saw in this Flanders campaign an attempt by the English to make an end of the war before American troops could be brought to France.

This battle was fought upon the heavy earth of Flanders and the first line of defending troops had difficult positions to hold. Struggle succeeded struggle, every nerve was strained to the utmost, officers and men lived at the highest tension. There were heavy losses on both sides. Day succeeded day, the weeks lengthened to months, and still the fighting went on. There was no end, seemingly, to the English *Zähigkeit*, but the Germans, in their turn, exhibited no small measure of the same quality. They held to their posts when these were all but untenable; it seemed that nothing could dislodge them. But Hindenburg's memoirs reveal the depth of anxiety which prevailed at Headquarters. He writes that the leaders of the German Armies could only pray for wet weather, which would make the heavy ground impassable, so that even the British would have to cease the offensive for a time. The fighting continued, however, until the month of September, and there was no victory for either side. Only the vast gloom of reaction set in after the months of overstrained powers. Hindenburg, whose love of attacking methods had now extremely been demonstrated, was heavily depressed by the continued defensive, and it was only when the unexpected British attack at Cambrai

* Tenacity.

was repulsed with heavy losses that he felt that there was at least a little light in the sky.

At Cambrai, the British broke through the German lines with the aid of tanks, and English cavalry forced its way almost into the town. It seemed that the day was lost, when fresh German troops hurried to the spot and made a wholly successful flank attack. They were able to regain from the British practically all they had lost and to remain triumphant victors of the situation. Hindenburg, himself, felt a very special pleasure in this victory, for it was the first that had been won since he had taken over the leadership of the Armies, and it was the result, too, of the first considerable attack by Germans since that time. Its effect upon the *moral* of the Army was very great, and the fact that it had followed immediately upon an attack with tanks reduced to a certain extent the sense of helplessness and terror which the infantrymen experienced in face of the invulnerable new weapon. Hindenburg felt sure that the ingenuity of his technical experts would soon find means of combating this monster of modern warfare, which produced so annihilating an effect upon a mere man.

The French supported the endeavours of England by an offensive at Verdun, and another near Soissons in October. At both these places Germany was well defended and the attackers had again to report heavy losses. For the most part, however, the French remained quiet.

The situation of the Bulgarian armies on the Macedonian front remained unchanged through the summer of 1917. Sarraïl did not engage in much fighting, and so Bulgaria simply remained where it was. At this time, however, her chief trouble was not so much the opposing of Sarraïl's

Army as the mobilization of the Greeks. Hindenburg paid little attention to this anxiety, for he did not believe that Greece would ever succeed in raising an army capable of taking the field, and the reports he received confirmed this view. In this, time was to prove him correct, and he set the anxiety of Bulgaria down to memory of the happenings of 1913.

The defeats of Turkey in Palestine and the loss of Jerusalem were matters which troubled Hindenburg very deeply, and it was with considerable relief that he heard of the curious apathy by which the news was greeted in Constantinople. He had expected riots and excitement, for he did not believe that Jerusalem could ever be recaptured, and when instead of bloodshed there was only indifference to be encountered, he felt that another crisis had been surmounted.

In February, 1917, the Kaiser decided to move his Headquarters from Pless to Kreutznach, in order to be nearer to the French front, and in consequence of the desire of the Emperor of Austria to be in intimate touch both with his Minister and with his military Headquarters, which were set up at Baden near Vienna in the beginning of the year.

Hindenburg left Pless with some regrets, for the owners of neighbouring estates had exhibited great hospitality to the Army leaders. He could not often, at this time, enjoy his favourite sport of deer-stalking, for his time was too fully occupied with more serious matters, but he had been able occasionally to accept one of the many invitations showered upon him by people of the neighbourhood.

In Kreutznach, however, he found a very warm welcome awaiting him from people who remembered his former

connection with the Rhine country, as Chief of the General Staff of the 8th Army Corps. He was already acquainted with the town, and he relates how its inhabitants vied with one another to show him their pleasure in his return to their land. The home of the General Staff and their dining-room were daily decked with flowers by Rhineland *Mädels*,* who were eager to honour the aged Field-Marshal and to show him that they appreciated to the full his great triumphs on many fields of battle. The victor of Tannenberg was no everyday being, but he writes that he accepted the homage offered him as an honour to the whole Army, of which he was one of the oldest representatives.

In Kreutznach, he celebrated his 70th birthday, and the first person to offer him congratulations was the Kaiser, who made a special journey to Hindenburg's quarters. This was Hindenburg's greatest joy on the occasion. The day was a bright one and the autumn sun shone upon the faces of the children of Kreutznach who turned out to offer him their good wishes. Those who appeared upon a similar errand included many wounded soldiers and some old veterans who had fought with him upon other battle-grounds, the memory of which had been eclipsed by the Homeric struggles of modern warfare.

Hindenburg relates a little event which took place on the night of his birthday. After he had gone to bed, the anti-aircraft guns started to fire with vigour, and did not cease until they had exhausted their ammunition. There had been rumours of an enemy air-raid, and it seemed that the gun crews started to fire on a false alarm. Hindenburg, who knew that the ammunition would give

*Girls

out quickly, breathed a sigh of relief that he could sleep at last when this occurred. The next morning the Kaiser showed him a number of shell splinters, from German guns, which had landed in the garden of his quarters. There had, after all, been some little danger in the night—but a large section of the population believed that the guns were being fired in honour of Hindenburg's birthday.

Meanwhile, political questions had become acute and the home conditions of the countries allied to Germany were such that they had to have assistance other than military. In Turkey there was danger of starvation. No one had sufficient food, and the blame for this circumstance was not to be laid to the door of a blockade such as Germany was suffering, but because there was no organization and no proper transport. Somehow the needs of the Army were supplied, and somehow the population in the towns were provided with bare necessities. Germany had to send bread to Constantinople and to arrange for grain to be despatched to Turkey from Rumania. This help was provided, although the conditions in Germany were so terrible, because, as Hindenburg states, the people of Constantinople would otherwise have starved. Had they suffered in this way, they would have revolted, and Turkish military assistance would have been lost to Germany, and this she continued to afford in spite of all her trials. In Asia Minor the Turkish army was daily growing smaller, owing to the astonishing number of deserters, which amounted to hundreds of thousands. Even this, however, did not cause Turkey to abandon the situation, and she did what was required of her with her depleted forces.

In Bulgaria, the country of rich harvests, there was also

distress owing to crops that were little more than moderate. Germany suggested that the crops should be evenly distributed in all districts, when they would have sufficed, but the answer was : " We don't understand these affairs ! " It was only too true, and there was no strong leader to take this helpless population in hand and show it how to deal with its own affairs. A leader was wanted and was not there, but the country was torn by many political factions, and the majority raised trouble over the home policy of the Government. The army began to suffer from lack of supplies, and the general discontent spread to the ranks of the soldiers. Germany made many suggestions for the improvement of the home affairs of the country, but, although they received some recognition, there was no one to see that they were put into force. Worse than the food question in Bulgaria was the mistrust with which Germany began to be regarded both in Sofia and in the country at large. Doubt was expressed regarding the ability, and even the willingness, of Germany to fulfil all the promises she had made to her smaller ally. The German Government had to do all it could to meet any demands made by Bulgaria and to keep the support of the army.

In Austria-Hungary, matters went from bad to worse. The efforts made by the Government to obtain some kind of peace between the different races which formed the country, failed completely, and a powerful move had been made by the Church to unite the country by means of a religious bond. This, too, failed entirely. Racial prejudice was brought more strongly into the foreground by the uneven distribution of food. One town went hungry, while another had plenty ; those who had sufficient to



Sport & General.

A LUNCHEON PARTY IN PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG'S
HUNTING BOX IN THE GRAMMERSBERG. THE PRESIDENT IS
ON THE EXTREME RIGHT.

eat were completely indifferent to the sufferings of their neighbours. Daily disbelief in a satisfactory outcome of the war spread like a blight over the country, and daily the section of the people who desired peace at any price increased. The victory over the Italians gave no pleasure to the hungry population, and the news of the breakdown of Russia was received with indifference. Hindenburg saw that it would not be long before the Austrian Government would have to yield to the demands for peace: he did not care to consider what the result would be should the Government unexpectedly find power to resist the will of the people in this matter.

In Germany itself, serious difficulties and dissensions had arisen, notably between the Government and the Military Leaders. Hindenburg, whose chief care was the Army, was determined that the full resources of his country should be placed at the disposal of the fighting forces. He saw, with deepening distress, how the unity of the country was disappearing, and he realized that this would have a weakening effect upon the Army. He found himself in strong opposition to the Government, and, in July, he handed in his resignation to the Kaiser. This was not accepted, but Bethmann Hollweg's* request to resign was duly approved. The retirement of Bethmann Hollweg was directly followed by the outward revelation of the thinly-disguised hostility which existed between the various political parties, and it was soon seen that a majority rested in the hands of that party which inclined to the "left."

Dr. Michaelis, who succeeded Bethmann Hollweg, was able to remain only a short time in office; force of circum-

* Chancellor.

stances proved too much for him and he was obliged to lay down the difficult post which he had so fearlessly accepted.

Hindenburg writes sadly that the real seriousness of Germany's situation was forgotten by the people at home, who lost sight of everything but party interests and dogmas. He was right in feeling that the lack of unity at home would have a bad reaction upon the soldiers ; but he forgot that people who have given everything, who have made the most supreme sacrifices, are bound to reach a point where they can do no more. The sufferings and deeds of the Army obscured for him the sufferings and deeds of those who had had to stay behind. In his memoirs, he gives weight to the effect which prolonged starvation must produce upon any population, but he does not seem to give it full weight. He emphasizes perpetually the necessity to keep the Army in the best shape possible, but he nowhere emphasizes the pressing necessity of a proper administration of home affairs.

A new Chancellor was found in Graf Hertling, and it was hoped that he would be able to lead the country for the best. He showed great skill in his handling of the different parties, and although he exhibited some distrust towards the leaders of the Army, he was honoured by Hindenburg for the gallant way he had answered, in his old age, his country's call. He remained in office until just before the Armistice was signed, when he retired. His death occurred shortly after his resignation.

Hindenburg refers with disgust to the propaganda which was used by the enemy to increase the dissatisfaction that was spreading amongst the German people.

“This type of propaganda,” he writes, “was called ‘Enlightening the Enemy.’ It should have been called ‘Veiling the Truth’ and, even worse, ‘Poisoning the spirit of the Enemy.’ It arises from a knowledge of insufficient strength to meet and overcome an opponent in open, honourable fight, and inability to break down his moral strength by a bravely-wielded sword.”

Whether such propaganda is not a justifiable means of fighting may be open to discussion, but one thing is abundantly clear. Its use could only be effective where the country was already disunited. Any process of “Enlightening the Enemy,” or even of “Poisoning the spirit of the Enemy,” would glance harmlessly off the armour of perfect unity and firm national will. But Germany has never had, and has not even now achieved, complete internal harmony, and there is an absence of national will. Before the war, the high degree of organization which was trained upon every grade of society, and the two years of military service, welded the huge population into some semblance of unity, and the monarchy was the pivotal point upon which even that semblance depended. Now in 1917 the Socialists and extremists began to murmur audibly and to ask where the monarchy had led them? Anti-war broadsheets were sold in the streets and pacifist meetings became frequent. The soldiers, returning on leave after months of soul-shattering warfare in the trenches, began to be infected with the spirit that prevailed at home. Not every man found himself in agreement with it, nor even nearly every man, but all the soldiers knew of its existence and this had some demoralizing results. A man who

knows that a sullen and discontented home lies at his back and a strong and determined foe is before him, cannot fight with the same enthusiasm as when his struggles are supported and applauded by his countrymen.

In the face of these facts, the achievements both of the German military leaders and of the Army during the year 1918 were all the more remarkable.

Hindenburg tells how the French prisoners spoke of the misery existing in their country and of the food distress that was beginning to be felt at home. "But," he writes, "their own appearance did not support these words." Of the English prisoners he says: "They spoke at the end of 1917 as they had spoken at the end of 1914. None of them had any joy in battle. But in England no one cared for this. Demands were simply made and fulfilled."

Hindenburg constantly praises the heroism of his armies and their enthusiasm and their joy in battle and work, and he constantly deplores the absence of political talent among his countrymen. "The lack of political discipline (in Germany) which has become second nature to the Englishman and the absence of a *Vaterlandsliebe** completely free from cosmopolitan fancies such as burned in the hearts of the French, were to blame, in my opinion, for the Peace Resolutions which had met with the approval of the Government in July, 1917."

* Love of the Fatherland.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PEACE AT LAST

THE year 1918 was to be the decisive one, and Hindenburg believed that it would be possible for Germany to wrest a victory from the Allies. With the release of the forces on the East Frontier, the Germans in France would outnumber the Allies and a determined attack could be made at one part of the line without weakening the defences of 1917. True the Allies had more guns and very many more aeroplanes than Germany could muster, but, if the well-seasoned troops could reach the Western Front before the fresh strength from America could make itself felt, there was hope of triumph. How was it that hope could exist?

“The answer,” says Hindenburg, “is easy to give but difficult to explain; it is expressed in the word ‘trust.’ Not trust in a lucky star or in vague hopes, still less trust in numbers or in outward strength: it was that trust with which a leader can place his troops before the fire of an enemy with complete conviction that they would endure to the utmost and make possible the apparently impossible. It was the same trust which had helped me through 1916-17.”

Further, the soldiers in France would certainly welcome the chance of an offensive. For years they had lain hidden in foul and muddy trenches, and suffered death and wounds caused by artillery. The enemy “went over the top” every now and then, and all that the Germans could do was

to defend their positions. Small wonder that they were sick to death of these conditions. Death was easier to face in the heat and storm of an attack than it was in the dismal trenches. Hindenburg would find that the right spirit ruled when he gave his orders.

Hindenburg hoped not only that the military situation would be saved, but that there would be a brighter outlook on the political horizon. A victory would surely, so he argued, cause the civil population to cease their complaints and tears. It would show them that the hardships of the past years had not been in vain and that their leaders could recognize the favourable moment when they saw it and turn it to the best advantage.

The finish of the military pretensions of Russia and Rumania was a factor to which he gave great weight when he exhorted the Austrians to hold on to their fronts. He was convinced that this would not be a matter of any serious difficulty to them. He knew Bulgaria to be strong enough to stand up against her opponents in Macedonia. The Turks had been freed from some of their troubles by the Russian breakdown in Asia Minor, and he believed they could support their fortunes in Mesopotamia and Syria with the armies released from Asia Minor.

Hindenburg now laid his plans for the offensive, and he chose that part of the line which stretched from Arras through Cambrai and St. Quentin, to La Fère. Hindenburg writes that he chose to attack against the British because their offensives had revealed an inability to cope with swiftly changing situations and he suspected that like weaknesses would be found in their methods of defence. "They worked too much according to scheme."

The Headquarters of the German General Staff were now removed from Kreutznach to Spa. An additional advance Headquarters was set up at Avesnes, and there the greater part of the General Staff arrived on March 19th, to discuss plans. Hindenburg was impressed by the absence of changes in France, and he was almost able to think himself back again in 1870. Now, as then, the inhabitants sat in their doorways, "the men silent, the women voluble, controlling the conversation; the children playing and singing on the green, as if in the midst of most profound peace. Happy youth!" Once again, as in the former war with France, Hindenburg found much to admire in the attitude of the French population. The Kaiser did not take up quarters in Avesnes, but lived in his special train, which was moved from place to place as the fortunes of war changed. He spent much of his time with the Army, and took little thought for his own comfort and safety.

The attack was to break loose on March 21st, and the fair spring weather suddenly changed. Rain set in, but Hindenburg welcomed the clouds and storms. They served, to some extent, as a cloak to veil the final preparations, the approach of the reserves and the drawing of guns to the required positions. No one knew whether news of the intended offensive had reached the English, and the moment approached without any undue disturbances from the enemy. Excitement rose with every passing hour; soldiers and their leaders were drawn together in the common hope that the laurels of victory were at last within their grasp. The 20th of March came, and with it an increase in the unfavourable weather conditions. Wind and rain enveloped

the countryside, but it was resolved not to allow any postponement.

March 21st dawned, and the land was covered in a thick mist. In Avesnes, the General Staff heard the distant rolling of the guns, which had spoken incessantly from the early morning hours. The German artillery was answered by that of the Allied troops, but this seemed to be mostly range-finding.

Still on the morning of March 21st, it was not possible to know whether the British were prepared or not for the approaching storm. At ten o'clock, the German infantry left the trenches and charged into the dense mist upon their opponents. Hindenburg waited anxiously for news. Reports reached him and were contradicted immediately by following dispatches. The position, on the whole, seemed hopeful. Towards midday the fog began to disperse and the sun shone down upon a scene of slaughter and bitter wrestling. Almost everywhere the British front line had been captured, but when evening set in it was seen that the centre of the German Army and the right wing group had been stopped at the second line of defence. The left wing, however, had pushed rapidly forward at St. Quentin, where there was a weaker defending force. Hindenburg, satisfied with the results achieved, was not inclined to rejoice too soon: the second day might easily produce a set-back, and the German offensive might suffer the fate that had been thrust upon so many allied attacks. The evening of the second day came, and Hindenburg was able to feel that his trust both in the methods he had employed and in the ability of his troops to move forward with skill and rapidity had been fully justified. The centre

of the German offensive had taken the third line of defence, the left wing had moved westward with a speed which had not been expected of them. The right wing had forced the British to evacuate their second line of defence, but had not been able to press forward sufficiently to make possible the destruction of the English in occupation of the Cambrai sector. Many enemy guns, great stores of ammunition and equipment had fallen into the hands of the victors, and files of prisoners began to pass down the white roads to captivity.

March 23rd saw the advance of the centre of the German Army and the left wing move further westwards. The Somme was reached, and, at one point, forded. The first German shells fell in Paris. Only the German right wing could not advance beyond the British second line of defence. English *Zähigkeit* was serving its purpose once more and the fierce attacks could not prevail against it. Hindenburg now determined to make the utmost strategic use of the advance, and he considered that the town of Amiens would be the best central point to attack, because of its railways and because it was a principal junction between the armies of France and England. Could Amiens be captured, a dividing-line could be drawn between the forces of these two allies, and he believed that such a division could even have an effect upon their relationship. He thought that the physical separation might have the effect of separating the different political interests of the two countries, and so the Germans advanced upon Amiens. But England and France saw the danger which threatened them, and British reinforcements from the north and many French troops were brought to the spot. Amiens must not be allowed to fall.

The German forces marched on across the old battle-fields of the Somme, over the shell-holed country that had been the scene of so much spilt blood and such nerve-racking terror. On they swept, and the town of Bapaume fell into their hands. The British, their resistance broken, retreated raggedly upon Amiens. There seemed to be a real possibility that German soldiers might reach this town. The right wing, however, was unable to advance against the British, and it became necessary to attack the hills to the east of Arras, in order to help this part of the line. This attempt succeeded only to a small extent. Now the centre of the German attack had to meet French reinforcements, and the hope of Hindenburg, that Amiens would be taken, or, at least, that Villers-Bretonneux (from whence it might be shelled) would fall, was proved vain. Even German soldiers had been unable to achieve the impossible. Men are human beings, and strength cannot be kept up indefinitely. Hindenburg, however, refused to admit that the effort had failed and that the aim might not still be attained. The Infantry was given the rest it needed; and early in April another attempt was made to capture Villers-Bretonneux. This was also unsuccessful, and the offensive was repulsed with considerable loss. Amiens was shelled by German artillery, but it remained safely in the hands of the Allies.

On the 9th of April the Germans started their offensive in Flanders. They attacked along the front from Armentières to La Bassée, and were obliged to make their way over broad fields where the ground had not recovered from the months of rain. They ploughed through the morass, and their advance was covered by a powerful barrage. Along this front were placed some Portuguese troops, and

when these saw the Germans approaching them across apparently impassable country, they forsook their positions and fled in great disorder. On April 10th, Estaires was won by the Germans, and they were also able to obtain possession of much ground to the north of Armentières. On April 11th, Armentières was evacuated by the English troops. The offensive went forward and Bailleul was captured and the Germans were able to reach the hills.

The movements of the German troops were seriously hampered by the great difficulties of communicating with their supplies. Over the soaking, swampy fields came the ammunition—but in insufficient quantities. Had it not been for the stores abandoned by the British it would have been even impossible adequately to feed the troops.

In the meantime, the German infantry was submitted to a raking machine-gun fire, and the position became daily more critical. Retreat meant certain disaster, and offensive, at a time when offensive was very dangerous, seemed to be the only hope of salvation. Mount Kemmel, which had been always in the hands of the Allies and which was strongly fortified, seemed to Hindenburg to offer a good aim for the shaft of the attack. "We hoped that the outer impression we received of this mountain was stronger than its true tactical value." On the 25th of April the storming of the hill was undertaken, the British defence was broken down immediately, and the Germans were left undisputed masters of the field. Ypres was threatened, and the British prepared to defend it to the last ounce of their strength. Hindenburg's immediate objective, however, was not Ypres but Cassel, for the thought of how

German heavy artillery would be able to shell Calais and Boulogne. The news he received from the Flanders front was good : here and there, it was true, the troops might have failed, but in the main he had some reason for his high hopes. By the end of April, however, these were lost. French troops arrived to the support of the British, and in May there was nothing to be done but to fall back upon the defensive.

The German leaders now turned their attention from Flanders to France, and on May 27th another great offensive was made between Soissons and Reims. This attack was attended by astonishing success, and Hindenburg writes that on the afternoon of the first day the report which reached the High Command stated that the German infantry was already crossing the Aisne. In a few days the Marne from Château Thierry to Dormans had been taken. The north wing of the attacking army approached Villers-Cotterêts, and Reims was threatened. Everywhere the French were driven back, and they abandoned an enormous quantity of stores and ammunition.

About this time, Hindenburg visited personally the battle-fields near Laon. In the winter of 1917, this town had scarcely been disturbed, but Hindenburg had an opportunity of seeing what terrible havoc had been wrought in the meantime. Paris had been shelled by long distance guns in the neighbourhood of Laon, and, consequently, the French had heavily shelled this town, believing that enemy ammunition was being brought there. Hindenburg writes that many inhabitants had been unable to escape and had been obliged to hide themselves in their cellars to escape destruction. They were in great misery and

distress, but the Germans were powerless to help them. Laon was, of course, not the only town that suffered bombardment, but it certainly was one of the worst sufferers. The Field-Marshal, on seeing the terribly changed aspect of the town and the fear of the people, confessed that it was a hard spectacle for a soldier to have to contemplate; and he also felt great compassion with the columns of prisoners, in connection with which he tells a story in his *Aus meinem Leben*.

One day he stood with another high officer of the German Army in the village of St. Quentin when a number of prisoners were marched down the street. His companion stepped up to the guard and called a halt, after which he addressed the row of shamed-looking men. He told them how the Germans honoured the conduct of the troops opposing them, and added that captivity often fell to the lot of those who had held out the longest. Hindenburg writes that the effect of these words was tremendous, and in particular that a tall young man, whose head had hung in shame, suddenly raised it and gazed gratefully at the speaker of these comforting words—in whom he recognized the Kaiser.

In the meantime the offensive was driven onwards along the front from Montdidier to Noyon, in the direction of Compiègne. It was impossible, however, to reach this town, and again an attempt to take Villers-Cotterêts was unsuccessful. Hindenburg had to be convinced that his troops did not possess the strength to break through the principal part of the defending army which was massed here. The Soissons-Reims offensive had, however, been successful beyond the highest expectations, and gave rise

to further hopes of ultimate victory, though these were never to be fulfilled.

Although the chief part of the French Reserve Army was ranged round Compiègne and Villers-Cotterêts, the railway services were so excellent and so well organized that any threatened part of the front could immediately receive support. At the beginning of July, strong American detachments were expected, and it did not seem to Hindenburg likely that the French would take the offensive before these arrived. In the neighbourhood of Reims was also a strong force, composed not only of French, but also of English and Italians.

Hindenburg decided to take the initiative, and on July 15th the German guns thundered their new barrage. Round Reims a terrific struggle blazed into action, although the town itself was not immediately threatened. The German infantry stormed and took the first line of trenches and then endeavoured to carry their attack into the second. Here, however, they met with powerful resistance and a devastating fire from the French artillery. The German supporting batteries were brought up, and Hindenburg writes that these had actually to be dragged to the scene of action by soldiers, because the terror-stricken horses refused to advance over the fields, which were full of shell-holes. The German guns, brought with such difficulty to their emplacements, were destroyed almost immediately by the enemy. To the South-west of Reims, and on both banks of the Marne, the German soldiers succeeded in pressing forward, especially in the direction of Epernay, where they had to meet a determined resistance, which they were able for the most part to overcome.

By the evening of the 15th of July, Hindenburg was able once more to congratulate the courage and ability of the German Army. Along the whole attacking front something like fifty guns had been taken, and more than a thousand prisoners were marched to the rear. Here was no small success, but Hindenburg was not entirely satisfied, and he waited anxiously for greater successes on the following day. But July 16th reached its close, and as the sun sank it had to be admitted that the troops had nowhere advanced to any considerable extent. In Champagne, the question arose that it would be better to cease the offensive for fear that the troops should suffer such heavy losses as would make them of little use in keeping the position they had won. Hindenburg, who saw that the advantage already gained was as much as could be expected, gave his consent to the cessation of attack and the resumption of purely defensive methods.

To the south of the Marne, however, and in the hills round about Reims, the German offensive was able to be continued. North of the river the offensive had almost ceased, and here, too, it was finally necessary to take up the defensive. On both banks of the river the Germans pressed slowly on in the direction of Epernay, and the evening of the 16th found them only about six miles from the town.

The 17th of July dawned and the battle in Champagne grew quieter. The guns continued to speak, it is true, but the sorely-pressed German infantry was able to gather some breathing space. To the south of the Marne, under continuous attack by the Allies, the Germans were scarcely able to maintain the ground they had won, and in places

they were obliged to retreat, although Hindenburg was deeply distressed by the necessity. In the hills the Allied attacks were so fierce that there was the greatest difficulty in keeping their positions. An advance on the part of the Germans was here quite impossible.

On the 18th of July came a blow by the Allies. German soldiers who could be spared for the work had gone to the harvesting in the corn-fields. Suddenly shells began to burst among them, but they noticed that their own artillery was replying but half-heartedly. The whole countryside was covered in mist. Shortly after the artillery fire had started the clatter of machine-guns began to be heard, and before the German soldiers had had time to realize what was happening, they saw the dreaded tanks rolling towards them through the waving corn-fields. The Allies had attacked upon the whole front between the Aisne and the Marne, and the front line had already been broken through in several places. The men who remained in the shattered front-line trenches fought desperately, and the supports in the rear endeavoured to form an adequate line of defence. The heroism exhibited by these troops did not serve to save the day. The Allies found their way through the whole section of the front. The German right-wing troops were obliged to abandon Château Thierry, although they were able to keep, to some extent, their position on the Marne.

The situation had now, however, become more than serious. Time after time the German front threatened to break—the soldiers had already done the utmost of which they were capable, and it could only be a short time before their final strength was exhausted. Hindenburg writes :

“We must leave the Marne. . . . How the enemy will rejoice if, for the second time, the name ‘Marne’ is connected with a turning-point in the history of the war! How Paris, how indeed all France, will breathe again; how this news will react in the whole world! . . .” But now the military point of view only must be considered. Its demand is clear and simple—out of this situation! . . . Although General Foch throws all his strength upon us from every side, so far he has only here and there achieved a deep break through our lines. Step by step, therefore, we are able to retreat. We can draw our valuable stores out of reach of the enemy and we can take up our posts in an orderly manner in the new line of defence.”

Those divisions intended for the attack in Flanders had to be hurried to the support of the soldiers by the Marne; and Hindenburg writes that this was the worst of the situation. It was now impossible to make an offensive against the British, for there were neither troops nor material.

The 8th of August was a bad day for Germany. Fog hung heavily over the land, and, in the morning, news came to Headquarters that the British had broken the German lines at Peronne. In the neighbourhood of Amiens tanks had forced their way past the defences. Many Germans were saved by the command to lie still in the corn-fields. The grain had not been cut, and, although the risk of remaining still was great, it was taken, and the concealed soldiers were undiscovered by their opponents. Against the attack the Germans were for the moment

powerless to act. Rumour, that plague which none can combat, had it that English cavalry had already reached and was threatening the rear.

Once again, however, failure by the Allies to press forward and make the best possible use of the advantage gained helped the Germans in their extremity. The afternoon of August 8th was almost quiet and the night uneventful. Through the darkness swept the trains bearing supports to the stricken front, but the counter-attack made by the Germans on August the 9th was a failure, and many lives were lost.

In spite of the gravity of the military position, Hindenburg still hoped to save the day. On August 13th he attended a consultation at Spa, when the Government discussed affairs with the military leaders. Hindenburg admitted that things were not well with the Army, but he pointed out that the Germans still stood deep in France, and this fact must not be forgotten. The Chancellor, Graf Hertling, expressed the view that an official offer of peace should not be made by Germany until the military situation had improved.

The days passed, and on August 20th the French again broke the German lines between the Oise and the Aisne, after three days of severe fighting. On August 26th the British advanced at Arras, with some success, and on the 2nd of September a great German retreat had to be undertaken both in France and in Flanders.

While the Germans were thus being forced to retreat along the West Front, serious news was brought to the High Command. Bulgaria collapsed. The country, which for long had been torn by opposing political factions

within, suffered from hunger and general disorganization. Even the Army was so badly fed and clothed that mutinies were frequent, and that section of the population which wanted peace increased daily and its voice was heard loudly proclaiming its desire. The soldiers simply left the battle-fields, and the centre part of the Army made little or no attempt to face the English offensive of September. A few German officers and men did what they could to hold up the rot that had set in, but in vain. The Bulgarians, writes Hindenburg, suddenly said that they were tired of fighting and wanted to go home to their wives and children. The officers did what they could to encourage the men to hold out against the comparatively weak divisions of English and Serbians. Hindenburg even quotes cases where the Bulgarians assisted the Germans to bring guns into position and to prepare for action and then hurriedly disappeared, leaving the actual fighting to the Germans. So impossible were the conditions for those willing to put up a resistance that Hindenburg and his Staff sent troops from the Western Front and agreed to dispense there, for the time being, with the services of any Austro-Hungarian divisions that could otherwise have been sent to France, and which were now also hurried to the Macedonian front. These supports, however, arrived too late, and Bulgaria signed an Armistice on the 29th of September.

In the meantime, the German troops on the Western Front held on. It was all they could do, and even that seemed too much to ask of them. Hindenburg and his Staff were now faced with the question, "When must we come to an end?" Hindenburg writes :

“He who, in such a case, turns for a solution to the great mistress of humanity, History, hears nothing of caution, but of boldness. When I look for example to our greatest monarch, I receive the reply : ‘Hold on.’”

In the meantime, while the gallant Army was shedding the last of its strength in vain endeavour against a stronger power, the political horizon grew darker and darker. The reserves who came from home brought to an Army at bay tidings that revolution stood at the door. If the people at home could not hold out—how should the men in the trenches? But even through these bitter hours they fought on.

At the end of September the Kaiser returned to Germany, and on the 1st of October Hindenburg followed him. As he writes : “I hoped to fight pessimism and to restore trust. But, the inward disturbances proved too heavy to make it possible to achieve this aim.” Things dragged on miserably through the month of October, and the rift between the statesmen and the soldiers widened until it became impassable. Hindenburg, however, directed the following letter to the new Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, on October the 24th :

“I am unable to conceal from your Highness that, at the last discussion of the Government, I painfully missed an appeal for goodwill and for the Army.

“I had hoped that the new Government would gather the whole strength of the German nation into the service of the defence of the Fatherland. This has not occurred. On the contrary, with little exception, reconciliation has

been spoken of rather than defence of the Fatherland against the threatening foe. This has first depressed and now disturbed the Army, as is proved by serious symptoms.

"To lead the national defence, the soldiers require not only people but also the spirit of conviction that it is necessary to fight and the mental buoyancy which must support them in their high enterprise.

"Your Highness must surely agree with me that, in consideration of the vast importance of the *moral* of the people in arms, Government and representation, this spirit must be borne into and held upright in the Army and the people.

"I appeal to your Highness as head of the new Government to be true to this sacred task."

This letter had no effect. The Chancellor, instead, demanded that Ludendorff be removed from his post because the leaders of the Army had interfered with matters political when, in fact, they had no right to such interference. The Kaiser felt that he would have to support the Cabinet and the Chancellor, and when on October 25th both Ludendorff and Hindenburg handed in their resignations, the former was approved by the Kaiser, but Hindenburg was asked to stay with the Army.

Here was a bitter tragedy! After so many years of struggling side by side, these two men were to be parted by politics—those politics over which Hindenburg had so often to complain. In his memoirs, he writes only a few curt sentences, but they do not serve to conceal how deeply he felt this blow.

“It was too late. Politics demanded sacrifices; the first was offered up on October 26th. On the evening of that day, I left Berlin, where I had gone with my First Quartermaster-General to consult with our all-highest War Lord, and returned to my Headquarters. I was alone. His Majesty had approved General Ludendorff’s request to resign and had refused me a similar request. On the following day I entered the rooms where, up to the present, we had worked together. I felt as if I had returned to the deserted house after attending the funeral of some one especially dear to me.”

Through all the days of political uncertainty and difficulty, through all the increasing danger-signals that were to be noted at home, the Army held its own in France. Forced as they were to a harrowing retreat over ground they had so hardly won, they still fought on, defending, retreating and dying. If the Army could hold out (and Hindenburg believed that the enemy could be kept from German soil for many months yet) and the population would support its endeavours, the Government might still gain an honourable peace. Should, however, the deadly spirit of revolution grip either people or Army, then indeed everything would be lost.

On November 9th, chaos broke loose. Hindenburg, seeing the throne threatened and the great work of Bismarck about to be overthrown, expressed his determination to send the Army to fight the revolutionaries. He did not believe that these were backed by the will of the people—his soldiers should turn away from the enemy without and fight the enemy within. But General Groener, successor

to Ludendorff, answered his chief with objections from the rest of the General Staff and strong proof that the Army would not train its guns upon its own people. An attempt to force soldiers into a civil war would result only in mutiny—it was useless to think of such procedure. Hindenburg was obliged to agree, for the proofs that his suggested course would be even worse than useless were too strong to be disregarded.

Serious riots took place in Berlin, which the Government was powerless to stop. Thousands of sailors who had helped to hoist the red flag of revolution upon their battle-ships had thronged to the capital. Soldiers who were on the reserve calmly sold their equipment and made for their homes.

In the middle of the tumult and distraction the Kaiser's advisers recommended him to take refuge in Holland, and he expressed his willingness to do all that lay in his power, even to abdicate, to save the country. And, on this fateful 9th of November, Prince Max of Baden announced the abdication of the Kaiser before the latter had made any decision. It was also announced that the Crown Prince had renounced his claim to his father's throne. A few hours after this momentous news had been made known Scheidemann (the Secretary of State) proclaimed the German Republic.

The Kaiser decided that he would stay with the Army, though he could not remain its Commander-in-Chief. This position he gave over to Hindenburg, the man whom he could trust. Even then, in that hour of gloom, the old Field-Marshal stood faithfully at his post; even then, when he might have found good reasons for leaving it. But the

cold star of duty which had guided him through the whole of his long life illumined his path—and he remained. The Kaiser, however, finally gave way to the pressure of his advisers and crossed the boundary of Holland, and he was followed by the Crown Prince. Hindenburg had gone to bed on the 9th of November after receiving a message that the Kaiser would remain at his side. On the morning of the 10th he awoke to find himself alone, for urgent counsels had changed the monarch's mind and he had fled. He had released the Army from its Oath of Fealty and had left to one old man the superhuman task of taking the soldiers back to their country.

At the present day, it is impossible to judge whether it might or might not have made all the difference to Germany had the Emperor not left his country. His motives for doing so were doubtless high, but it is open to question whether he was rightly served by those about him. A stronger king, a true descendant of Frederick the Great, would surely have stayed with his Army, for there can be little question that a large part of the soldiery would have stood by him. Some German historians express the view that even at the eleventh hour the revolution could have been stopped (though at the cost of some bloodshed) had the Kaiser acted with vigour. It is only fair to say that others believe the revolution would have triumphed in any case.

Though released from his Oath of Loyalty to the Kaiser, Hindenburg could not feel himself other than bound to the monarch he had served with such devotion and faith. When he found that he was quite alone and that he would have to submit himself to a Government with which he

could have no sympathy, all his inclination must have leaned towards resignation. He knew, however, that he alone could hope to have any success in getting the troops peacefully back to Germany and to their homes, and he conquered his desire to withdraw from his position. Here he revealed the true greatness of his personality when he placed himself and his authority at the service of the Social Democrat, Friedrich Ebert, to whom and to whose associates Prince Max of Baden handed over the reins of power. This act was one of the most supreme self-sacrifice—it revealed the extent of Hindenburg's love for his country and his people as nothing else could have done. More than once he had shown that he was a great soldier; he now proved that he was also a very great man.

The *Entente* demanded that the occupied country should be evacuated in fifteen days, and in fifteen days more the evacuation of the left bank of the Rhine was to be completed. This task placed a terrific strain upon the High Command and upon the war-weary soldiers. Three million men had to be conveyed home along streets which for the most part were uphill. The railways were so badly disorganized that the greater part of the Army had to move on foot. It must also be remembered that among those three million were many thousands of men who were wounded or ill, and this fact added its weight to the difficulties of the task. It was, however, carried out with that perfect organization which is the just pride of Germany; and, for the most part, it was carried out peacefully. The men, whose heroism had won admiration in the ranks of the enemy, remained true to their training to the end. With every opportunity of turning into a "red" army of terror, they nevertheless

refrained from mutiny and pillage and carried their laurels untarnished into the quiet of their homes. They followed with honour the great example of duty which had been set them by Hindenburg.

For the most part—but not entirely! In Berlin there were fierce street fights, and the revolution—as most other revolutions have done—took its toll of lives. At last, the fighting came to an end, and it was now the task of every man who had the weal of the Fatherland at heart to help to stem the threat of Bolshevism.

Finally the day came when the Allies demanded the German consent or refusal to the Versailles terms. Hindenburg was asked for an opinion. He replied that he did not think that a resumption of military activities could possibly lead to a good result, but that to a soldier a death with honour was preferable to a shameful peace. The German Government, however, yielded to the demands of the Allies—it is certainly difficult to see what else they could have done—and the soldier had to bow to the strong hand of fate. Against one clause, however, he set himself with a fierce determination—it should never be permitted that the person of the Kaiser be handed over to the Allies. On the 3rd of July, Hindenburg wrote a letter to the President in which he assumed the full responsibility for all the actions of the High Command from August, 1916, including the orders of the Kaiser, which he declared had been given in every case on his personal advice.

On the same date he directed the following letter to Marshal Foch :

“ As a soldier old in service and for a time the principal

military adviser of my Emperor and King, I consider it my duty to address these lines, in the name of the old German Army, to you, Sir Generalissimo, as Chief of the Armies of the Allied Powers, to ask you to refrain from demanding that His Majesty the Kaiser be delivered into your hands. As the supreme head of an Army which through centuries has upheld the tradition of true soldiers' honour and knightly sentiment as its highest ideal, you will be able to appreciate our feelings. I am ready to make every sacrifice to keep this shameful humiliation from our people and our name. Therefore I put my person entirely at the disposal of the Allied Powers, in the place of my royal master. I am convinced that every other officer of the old Army would be prepared to do the same."

This letter was vouchsafed no reply.

On the day upon which it was written, July 3rd, Hindenburg laid down his office and returned to the quiet of his house at Hanover. At last, it seemed, he would be able to live in peace and retirement and to spend the remaining years of his life in the intimate home circle which meant so much to him.

Even then, however, though he did not know it, his work for the Fatherland had not been completed; he was destined before very long to be called to the highest position which the new Germany had to offer.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A YEAR OF REST AND QUIET

ON July 4th, 1919, Hindenburg reached the town of Hanover, which had prepared a festive welcome for its hero. The streets were hung with flags and garlanded with foliage and flowers, and all the inhabitants lined the pavements to join in the cries of welcome. Hanover had been the first town of many to present him with its freedom, and the citizens now placed a house at his disposal which was to be his for life. The famous painting of Hindenburg and Ludendorff at work, by Professor Vogel, had also been acquired by the town.

The Field-Marshal was not, however, to be allowed to enjoy the retirement he craved. Fame surrounded him and set him so much apart that he could not even walk in the early mornings without being followed by a crowd. "My wife," he said to a visitor on one occasion, "has gone shopping. I used to like to do this myself, but now if I go out there is always danger that I shall cause a traffic block because of the crowds that follow me!" Had he been physically a smaller man, he might have escaped attention to some extent, but his giant figure attracted every eye.

On October 2nd, his birthday, his house was besieged by admirers and stormed by the school children. As often as he would consent to appear they cheered him and sang the "*Deutschland über alles*."

But the voice of approbation was not the only voice that was heard in the land. Murmurs arose against the military leaders of the country, and it was savagely proclaimed

that they were to blame for the long duration of a disastrous war. The end of these complaints was that Hindenburg and Ludendorff found themselves obliged to attend a meeting of a Government Committee of Examination to answer for their actions.

Ludendorff and Hindenburg stood together in this hour, as they had stood together on the Eastern and Western Fronts. The Committee tried to attach certain responsibilities to Ludendorff, and Hindenburg spoke. "General Ludendorff has always acted in full agreement with me. Who attacks him, therefore, also attacks me!" In face of these words, nothing could be done against the former First Quarter-master General.

Both men had a tremendous reception in Berlin, and, when Hindenburg was led into the Council Chamber, every man in it rose to his feet, acting on an irresistible impulse, and thus they too offered their tribute to the man whom they were to "examine." The spleen and the hate faded after Hindenburg had said what he had to say. After this, there would not be found many men in Germany to raise their voices against him. His words had always the simplicity of a soldier, but they were strong with conviction and hope.

"In spite of everything," he said at this time, "I believe that Germany will rise again. . . . A people that has borne so monstrous a burden, until it has finally been torn to pieces, cannot sink for ever. . . . When work and order and national feeling return to us, we shall recover from the catastrophe. We must think of the men who died as heroes before the enemy and, in rebuilding the

Fatherland, we must work as they did with equal faith and self-sacrifice—then all will be well. To my last hour, the re-birth of Germany shall be my only care, the centre of my fears and prayers.”

So he returned to Hanover, cleared from any suspicion of guilt in connection with the war and its result. His reception by the youth of the town was uproarious. The time at which his train was expected was spoken in the lecture rooms, and these were promptly deserted, while the station was invaded by students who were unable to do enough in proof of their devotion and admiration for their great fellow-citizen. They wished to “bring him home in triumph to his house.” A short time later, these same enthusiastic spirits went as volunteers to help in suppressing the “red” outbreak in the Ruhr district, and, on their return, they marched past the Field-Marshal’s house to the stirring strains of the “Fridericus March.”

Hindenburg’s love for children and for the young led him often into their society. He played their games and treated their confidences with a sort of serious respect that endeared him to them all, but more especially to the grandchildren who were now growing up around him. Professor Theodor Lessing writes that he was once, temporarily, a master in a school at Hanover, and it fell to his lot, on some festive occasion, to conduct a troop of boys to Hindenburg’s house, where they were to sing “*Deutschland über alles.*” The old man came out to speak to them, and he made a most profound impression upon Lessing, not so much by the words he spoke as by the conviction with which they were uttered.

“ I should like to experience this moment again,” writes Lessing,* “with its mixture of sensations, unity and equality with all children, the hearty laugh of overflowing spirits and the sacred humility ; and, above all, to feel once more my astonishment—for I had not held such a degree of childishness to be possible.”

There was no indication that an old and experienced man was unbending to untutored youth—the impression given was simply that of a comrade talking to his contemporaries with complete understanding of their minds and hearts. And it is this deep accord with human beings of all ages that prevents the picture of Hindenburg from bearing a dangerous resemblance to the picture of a prig. There is something galling to erring humanity in the contemplation of a fellow human being who seems to be proof against all the voices that might lead him astray, whose first aim and object is always to devote himself to his immediate duty. The hard outline must be softened if it is to be regarded sympathetically, some warmth and colour must be allowed to touch it.

Hindenburg saw in the children the hope of the future, and their importance, in his eyes, could not be exaggerated. They were to rebuild Germany, they were to make up for the loss of the “glorious times of the German Empire,” which had so suddenly and tragically disappeared. The Revolution had wounded him so deeply that he could not speak of it without betraying strong emotion, but the time was to come when he would be able to reconcile himself with the new Germany where there was no crowned head.

* *Hindenburg*, by Theodor Lessing.

Hindenburg was now, however, to be tested by most poignant grief. His wife, after several operations, died on May 14th, 1921, and the whole town followed her coffin to the grave. It was fortunate that his son was stationed just then at Hanover and was able, with his wife and children, to bring some comfort to him in this trouble, and to prevent his loneliness from being too extreme.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE WEIMAR CONSTITUTION

THE old soldier continued to pursue the even tenor of his way and he took a keen interest in German politics. His abhorrence of intrigue and diplomacy did not disappear, but rather increased in violence ; for he saw with dismay how the many parties in Germany were serving to divide the country into factions.

Until 1919, Germany had been Nationalist in tendencies, but, when the Nationalists fell into discredit, the chief powers of the Government fell into the hands of the Socialists, whose leader was Ebert, the first President, and a new order came into existence in the shape of the Weimar *Verfassung** of August, 1919. This was largely the work of Herr Hugo Preuss, Secretary of State for Home Affairs, who made the first draft, though this was afterwards changed to some extent. The new Constitution came into force with its publication on the 13th of August, and it gave the political power to the members of the *Reichstag*, the elected representation of the country. It lays down that the Cabinet can stand only with the approval of the *Reichstag*, and that a withdrawal of that approval forces the Cabinet to resign. In such a case the President is called upon to appoint a Chancellor and to entrust him with the formation of a new Cabinet, which has the approval of the *Reichstag*. According to this, new Germany is a Parliamentary Republic after the French example ; but, so far as the election of the President is concerned, it differs entirely from the French system. Whereas the French

* Weimar Constitution.

President is elected by the Parliament, the Weimar Constitution lays down that the President of Germany must be elected for a period of seven years by the common, equal, direct and secret vote* of every citizen† who has reached the age of twenty. The same system applies to the election of the members of the *Reichstag*, and it differs from the English system in that every vote is given to a party and not to a man, and that for every sixty thousand votes received by any one party, a candidate from that party's list becomes a member of the *Reichstag*. This Constitution renders the President independent of the Parliament, and enables him to keep himself outside party divisions and influences.

From the inauguration of the Republic the Nationalists accused the Socialists of pandering to the late enemy, and of being so anxious to conciliate other nations that they threw dignity and honour to the winds. The country, as a whole, was torn by party dissensions, and no single party had sufficient strength to carry out a definite policy. When the terrible inflation time came, many people thought it was directly due to the Government lack of policy both as regards foreign and home affairs. The inflation was most acutely felt by the middle classes, the supporters of the old régime, and they felt bitterly towards those who seemed careless of the old ideas‡ and inclined to a reconciliation with the rest of Europe rather than to an attempt to repair the losses of the war at home.

Roughly speaking, the population was divided into two

* *Allgemeine gleiche unmittelbare und geheime Wahl.*

† Men and Women.

‡ Germany for the Germans.

camps ; one which worked for immediate results only and took no thought for the morrow ; and one which desired to bear all things in the present, if by so doing a richer future might be bequeathed to the following generations. New parties were constantly coming into existence because of the discontent with which the struggles of the already established ones were regarded by the people. Germany, indeed, was again a house very much divided against itself. This state of affairs, however, was suddenly made very clear by the death of President Ebert.

Ebert had not submitted himself to election by the people according to the rules of the Weimar Constitution, but was created President by the first National Congress (*Nationalversammlung*) after the revolution. At his death, no party felt strong enough to obtain a sufficient majority over all other parties for a future President. The result was a kind of amalgamation of the more important political groups. The candidate of the Central* Parties was Dr. Marx ; while the "right wing" parties† supported Dr. Jarres. The preliminary elections showed that Jarres could scarcely hope for a victory over Marx and that the candidate of the Communists stood no chance whatever.

Seeing that Jarres stood in so precarious a position and had very little support in South Germany, the right wing men took council together, and considered whether they had not better change their candidate. They needed some one with a personality that should appeal to every one, and they thought of Hindenburg—Hindenburg whose name still had a magic sound in German ears, and whose

* *Zentrum, Demokraten, Sozialdemokraten.*

† *Deutschnationale Volkspartei and Deutsche Volkspartei.*

Army days had taken him into so many parts of Germany that he might be said to have a foothold in all the districts of the country. Hindenburg, the victor of Tannenberg and of the Masovian Lakes, and so nearly victor in France, was to be a leader now on a milder battlefield ; for the war was to be waged with words instead of drums and with election slips instead of shells. It was the last battlefield of the old soldier, but the field was bloodless.

Henceforth retirement and peace, which he had so justly earned, were to be his no longer, for the fierce light that beats upon the thrones of kings shines also upon the less pretentious house of a president. Hindenburg knew well what he was giving up and realized fully the weight of what he was undertaking. But he considered no price too high to pay for the restoration of his country's fortunes, and he would spare no effort which he was capable of making, in order to contribute his personal share to the work. Perhaps, like Hiawatha, he had a vision of the country that was to arise in the future : and he was not the man to hold back because the task seemed too great. He could see only his duty, and knew that he must fulfil it.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG

WHEN Hindenburg was asked to accept the candidature for the Presidency, he did not refuse: but he made it clear that he would not consent to be the tool of any political party. He would go his own way—the way which he regarded as the right one.

In accepting the candidature, under any conditions whatever, it might appear superficially that Hindenburg was prostituting his instincts and his convictions for personal gain. He, the monarchist, the Prussian soldier, could not consent to be the President of a Republic without arousing the strongest possible comment both in Germany and abroad. Here again, however, as once before when he remained with the Army and placed his services at Ebert's disposal, the observer must clearly see a subordination of self to the interests of the country. Was he, a monarchist, in accepting the seat of President, forswearing his Oath to the Kaiser? No, for the Kaiser had left the country, and his action had absolved the soldiers from their oath. But so rigid a monarchist as Hindenburg could never consider himself released from the vow thus sworn—all he could do, to be true to it, was simply to remain in his retirement at Hanover until time chose to bear him and his honour to the grave. There can be no small doubt that inclination spoke thus—and also he was old, so old that no one could have reproached him had he decided to act in accordance with his inclinations. He saw, however, that his country needed him, and the voice of the country was one to which so ardent a patriot could not close his ears.

Germany was trying to rebuild her fortunes and recover from her losses and desired his help in this work. Duty called him from his house in Hanover and he obeyed the call. And, in his famous *Osterbotschaft** of 1925, he explains the grounds which led him once more to take an active share in the future of his country. It reads :

“ To the German people :

“ Germans of all races and provinces, at whose hearts lie the well-being of the Fatherland, have offered me the highest post in the State. I obey this call, after long reflection, in homage to the Fatherland. My life is open before the whole world. I believe that, even in difficult times, I have done my duty. If duty orders me now, without consideration of party, person, origin and profession to act as President upon the basis of the constitution, I shall not fail. As a soldier I have always the thought of the whole nation and not of the parties. These are necessary in a State ruled by a Parliament, but the head of the State must stand above them, and, independently of them, must rule for every subject. I have never lost my faith in the German people and in the support of God. But I am no longer young enough to believe in sudden changes. No war, no inward insurrection can serve to free our fettered and disunited nation. It needs long, quiet, peaceful work. It needs above everything to be released from those who have made of politics a business. No State can exist without order and without purity in its public life. The President is especially called upon to uphold the sacredness of

* Easter Bulletin.

justice. Just as the first President, even when he became the defender of the constitution, never denied his origin from the social-democratic working-classes, so no one shall ever be able to presume that I have given up my political convictions. Like Dr. Jarres, whom I highly esteem, at this time I do not consider the form of Government of principal importance, but the spirit which pervades that form. I stretch out my hand to every German who thinks nationally, who protects the dignity of the German name at home and abroad, and who desires freedom of worship and class understanding, and put to him the request: 'Help me, too, to work for the resurrection of the Fatherland.'"

Hindenburg thus accepted the candidature, but there were many voices raised in protest both in Germany and abroad. Some people, among them many who were devoted to Hindenburg, declared the voting would go against him because of his age,* and there would be many reproaches against those responsible for his re-entry upon the stage of active affairs. Others stated he had been simply the dupe of party politics. Some declared that he would start a new war, and some that his election would add to the unpopularity of Germany abroad. But the dissentient voices failed to carry the day. The victor of Tannenberg had behind him the love and esteem of the great number of the people of his country. He was a man of whom none dared say that he came to his high office otherwise than with clean hands; he was no mere party politician. His personality held an ascendancy over all

* He was 77.

such considerations as party, he was Hindenburg for the German people, and Hindenburg for the Nationalists, Socialists, and Social Democrats. He was equally trusted by all, and the result of the election was almost a foregone conclusion.

On April the 26th he was elected President, with 14,655,766 votes, and a majority of roughly 900,000 over his opponent, Dr. Marx. The telegraph wires got to work, and the news was soon spread all over the world. The effect of the announcement is well known. Some of the papers saw in the result of the election a step towards the restoration of the monarchy. They saw Hindenburg simply as a representative of the discredited German "militarist" class, and they thought that the hour of its restoration was approaching. It was not possible that Hindenburg the soldier would be content with anything else. He was too old, too set in tradition, to think of compromise. Little by little, however, the awakened distrust died down, and it was not long before the foreign papers were able to praise the bearing and policy of the new President.

Hindenburg said good-bye to Hanover and to his retirement, and, on May 11th, 1925, he made his triumphal entry into the capital. It was the third time he had taken part in a triumphal progress through Berlin—but it was in great contrast to the first two occasions. Once, when little more than a boy, after the war with Austria, he rode in the train of the King of Prussia on a September day in 1866. The second time was in June, 1871, behind the first Kaiser, on his return from France. Now, in 1925, himself the central figure, he entered Berlin as the chief representative

of a new order. Now, as then, the streets were hung with flags and the houses were garlanded. Now, as then, dense crowds of people thronged the pavements and shouted their welcome—only the pageantry of monarchy was missing, and instead of a uniformed king a soberly clad President was the subject of the acclamations.

On May the 12th Hindenburg entered the *Reichstag* in company with its President, Herr Löbe. The Field-Marshal's entry was the signal for all those present to rise to their feet. He took up his position upon the flower-decked platform, under the black eagle on the wall. There was a silence, which was broken by the voice of Herr Löbe.

“*Herr Feldmarschall*: The German people, at the election of April the 26th, chose you to be the President and you have been called upon to fill the highest, most honourable place in the German Republic. Article 42 of the Weimar Constitution ordains that you shall swear the Oath of the Constitution before the assembled representatives of the people. I have called the members of the *Reichstag* together to witness this solemn act, and I now hand you the form prescribed and ask you to swear this Oath.”

The President-elect then made reply :

“I swear by God, the Almighty and Omniscient, that I will devote my strength to the welfare of the German people, care for its prosperity, preserve it from harm, support the Constitution and the Laws of the country, conscientiously fulfil my duties and maintain justice towards all men. So help me God.”

The few serious words were spoken with deep sincerity and they broke a silence so profound that it almost seemed as if the members of the *Reichstag* had ceased to breathe. The taking of the Oath made Hindenburg the President of his country, and, after a speech of welcome delivered by Herr Löbe, he replied in clear, forceful tones :

“ *Herr Reichstagspräsident !* Accept my most hearty thanks for the words of welcome you have just spoken in the name of the people’s representation, after I have taken the Oath according to the Constitution of August the 11th, 1919. *Reichstag* and President belong together, because they are both directly chosen by the people. Upon this basis alone rests their power. Both together incorporate the sovereignty of the people, which forms the ground of our political constitutional life. That is the deep meaning of the constitution, to which just now I have most solemnly pledged myself. But, while the *Reichstag* is the place where differences of opinion* and of political conviction wrestle with one another, the President must serve all the working and re-creative powers of the people, outside Party interests. So, in this place, I wish once more expressly to state that I shall devote myself to the uniting of our people. This great task will certainly be made easier if, in this high house, Party strife be not based upon the advantage of one party or one profession, but upon who can most faithfully and most successfully serve our heavily tried people. I confidently hope that the noble contest, in

* Hindenburg used the word *Weltanschauung* (looking upon the world), for which there is no English translation.

truest fulfilment of duty, will form the surest basis, after the strife of intellect and opinions, upon which we shall find our common level in the work that has been entrusted to us."

Rapturous applause greeted these brief sentences. Here was no glib politician who tried to dazzle one party or another, but rather a plain soldier who saw his duty before him and meant to do it. "I wish expressly to state that I shall devote myself to the uniting of our people, and to the rehabilitation of the Fatherland." No Party should be able to claim the new President, for he would simply keep himself outside all Party strife.

In the meantime, the crowds were waiting in the streets, impatient to greet their idol, for the personality of this stern martinet was haloed by the glamour of his achievements, and the people greeted not only their new President but their old Field-Marshal. At a quarter past twelve the great doors of the *Reichstag* were opened, those doors which are so seldom used, and the new President appeared upon the grand staircase. A roar of applause greeted him and he was rapturously answered when he called for cheers for the German Fatherland. A perfect babel arose, however, when the Chancellor (Dr. Luther) called out to the people: "*Unser Reichspräsident, Herr von Hindenburg, hoch ! hoch ! hoch !*"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

BIRTH OF A NEW GERMANY

IT was indeed a heavy task for a man of seventy-seven years to undertake all the cares of State in so torn and distressed a country. Perhaps it was small wonder that at this time the newspapers told many stories of Hindenburg's "nervousness," but so frequent were articles of this kind that an acquaintance of the President once asked him if they were true. "Oh," replied the great man, "I always whistle when I am nervous." "But," remarked a friend, who overheard the conversation, "I have never heard you whistle." "Well," said Hindenburg, "I haven't yet!"

He was, indeed, undismayed by the great work which lay before him, and he was perfectly clear as to the policy he intended to pursue. He would work to unite the country and to lay at least the groundwork for its rehabilitation in the eyes of the world.

After the war was over and the inflation had passed, every thinking man in Germany, no matter what his political views might be, realized the urgent necessity to rebuild the physical health of the nation. No country could hope to arise from disaster if its population were shattered by ill-health and above all if its children were not helped to recover from the effects of under-nourishment. In the days before the war, every man had to undergo his two years of military service and to submit himself, during that time, to the most rigid mental and physical discipline.

The Army existed no longer, and a great vehicle for the training of young men had therefore disappeared. Some-

thing had to be found to take its place, and that something was sport. The Germans have always been expert gymnasts and swimmers, but they never used to play games universally, as, for example, we play them in England. Football, swimming, cycling, tennis, rowing, riding and, where nothing else was possible, walking, were eagerly taken up in every province. The week-ends found young and old people streaming to the nearest athletic grounds and rivers so as not to be left behind in the competition for physical health. So great was the enthusiasm that the organized *Sportgemeinde*,* a society that kept itself free from political considerations, had enrolled 7,000,000 members. Ebert, the first President of the German Republic, had regarded the Sport Movement with great sympathy, and had always done what he could to further it, but its members received the news of Hindenburg's election with the most unrestrained rejoicing, for they realized that the new holder of the first place in the land had, in his youth, undergone the bodily discipline of the Cadet School, and they thought that he, more than any civilian, would be in a position to understand and sympathize with the aims and objects of the *Sportgemeinde*.

As a young man, Hindenburg had never played such games as tennis or cricket, nor had he taken part in track events; but he had always recognized the necessity of keeping fit. He walked, rode and shot, and he entertained, indeed, something like a passion for the last-mentioned sport. The day after the battle of Tannenberg he invited the chief forest-keeper of a neighbouring estate to breakfast and with him held a long and eager discussion

* Sport Association.

about deer-stalking and hunting in general, and, as President of Germany, he did not cease to enjoy shooting. The members of the *Sportgemeinde* were right when they turned to Hindenburg for help and encouragement, for here, if nowhere else, existed a possibility to unite all sorts and conditions of people into a compact whole.

Shortly after the war there was some suggestion in foreign countries that Germany was secretly building up a new army "camouflaged" as a sport movement. Nothing could have been less true than this statement. Germany was simply trying, then, as she does to-day, to replace in some measure the healthy physical training which her men had received in the days of compulsory service.

Hindenburg's sympathy with this sport movement and its aims was immediately aroused, and he received five officials of the *Sportgemeinde* shortly after he became President in order to hear what they had to say. He at once expressed his interest and promised to support the youth of the country in every way that lay in his power. On the next day he addressed the following letter to Dr. Lewald, the Chairman of the State Committee for Physical Culture :

" Berlin, 19th June, 1925.

" YOUR EXCELLENCY,

" At yesterday's discussion with your Excellency and the other members of the State Committee, I was very interested to hear of the work which is being done by the German State Committee for Physical Culture. I will emphatically support its efforts to promote the cause of physical training amongst the German people. Physical culture is a citizen's duty ; it ensures the health of the

people and demands action, 'team spirit' and courage—characteristics which should form the basis of every healthy State.

"For this reason I am glad to think that the youth is to be enjoined to work hard at gymnastics and sport, and that the whole population is to be encouraged, by means of building many sports grounds and practice fields, to use their bodies; it is with great pleasure that I follow the State Competitions and Games and I am also very glad that the State Committee for Physical Culture has once more undertaken that German youth shall be represented again at the International Olympic Games so that the world may be shown that the strength of the German people is inexhaustible.

"I regard as specially praiseworthy the foundation of the School for Physical Culture where organized bodily culture is taught, and I am glad to realize that the Government and the State of Prussia have recently generously helped to complete the German School for Physical Culture and the German Stadiums. At the same time, the authorities cannot bear the full weight of financing so gigantic an undertaking, and I therefore hope that those sections of the population who are in a position to do so will further subscribe towards the building of the German 'Sport Forum' and the other efforts of the State Committee for Physical Culture.

"To give physical training is to serve the Fatherland!

"I wish to express my thanks to the State Committee for its past activities and my best wishes for its future.

"I remain, etc.,

"VON HINDENBURG."

On October the 18th of the same year the President laid the foundation-stone of the Sport Forum, and, the ceremony finished, he addressed a few words to the spectators.

"German youth," he said, "to whom this building is dedicated, be true, be united, be strong and hard!"

There was always something military in the way in which he addressed those who distinguished themselves in the realm of sport. Thus, when a victorious team of gymnasts, lately returned from a brilliantly successful tour of America, was introduced to him, he told its members that he hoped all German gymnastic teams would be found, as this one had been, always "at their posts."

Hindenburg, as an old officer, took a most personal interest in the sport of riding. He attended equestrian exhibitions and horse-shows in Berlin, and, whenever his travels took him through districts which were renowned for horse-breeding, he inspected farms and stables and showed his pleasure in the work that was there being carried out. His interest in racing was also great. *Hoppegarten** saw him frequently, and one of the annual classic events there is a race called "The Hindenburg."

He also recognized the importance of swimming, and he spoke on one occasion with anxiety about the number of people who lost their lives each year by drowning. The Society for Life-Saving, whose object was to teach every swimmer how to save life, met with his most profound approval.

So personal and so active was his interest in the Sport Movement that he attended as many events and festivals

* Berlin Racecourse.

in connection with it as he possibly could. He founded many prizes and gave his close attention to all details brought to his attention. His trust in the healthy youth of the country never faltered, neither did his hope that from it would spring the re-builders of the great nation; and this was the reason for his strong support of the *Sport-gemeinde*.

His conscience, however, did not allow him to overlook the importance to youth of work. Upon his own writing-table, as upon his father's before him, stood a little shield bearing the words *Ora et labora*, and it might be said that these three words were his watchwords throughout his long life. Pray and work! Himself a rigid Protestant, he possessed, nevertheless, a wide tolerance towards all forms of worship. When, in July, 1925, he received representatives of Evangelical, Catholic and Jewish Churches, he addressed to them the following words :

“ Your united declaration that you will use the religious powers of the German people whose representatives you are for the maintenance of the State and the re-building of our beloved Fatherland, has filled me with the deepest satisfaction. I see in it all the more a valuable fortress for our home conditions because I am so fully alive to the great task of the religious bodies in forming the spiritual life of the nation. I take this opportunity once more to assure you that, in my high office, I shall respect all beliefs and all points of view with equal conscientiousness; and shall always cherish the spiritual life of our people. If I may make a request, I should like you to regard this reception of the representatives of different beliefs by

the representative of the German State in a light other than that of mere form. As you, gentlemen, have come here to express your common good wishes towards myself, so may also your various churches and societies always strive to achieve that conciliation, that respect for one another, and that ground for common work without which the future of Germany cannot be secured."

Thus, on every public occasion, Hindenburg always stressed the need for co-operation among the different section of the people. He saw no salvation in anything but in union and in working for a common ideal. The common ideal, however, was to be the rehabilitation of the country by means of a healthy home life, and not by means of an obsequious pandering to the rest of Europe. A restored, revitalized nation should in the future receive her due from the rest of the world : a young, new generation should retrieve the lost battle—not indeed in a new war but in the re-birth of a mighty nation.

Even before he became President, Hindenburg stood in close relationship with many elementary and Public Schools and Universities. Many honorary degrees were conferred upon him, and a number of schools throughout Germany bear his name. He has exchanged much correspondence with the masters and boys of these schools, and on these occasions his letters always appealed for team work, for enthusiasm in work and play, and for a desire to help to raise the fallen fortunes of the country, to be encouraged amongst even the youngest. Georg Brandes once wrote*

* *Goethe*, by Georg Brandes (The Introduction).

that when Germany fell away from the teaching of her greatest son, Goethe, she fell from her place of honour in the world—and Hindenburg realized that a profound respect for that past culture, whose brightest ornament was Goethe, should be inculcated into the growing generation. The war might have been lost, commercial prosperity might have disappeared and the monarchy have fallen—but this at least remained. The great culture of the past, the heritage of literature and music that belongs so intimately to every German, could never be taken away. And, with such an inheritance to support her, Germany should rise again, purified and revived by the dark period through which she had passed.

On May the 10th, 1926, Hindenburg spoke at Weimar and emphasized the importance to Germany of her intellectual life.

“ There are two towns . . . which are especially dear to and honoured by us and which, in all German eyes, are shrines—they are Wartburg, so rich in legend, the heart and centre of the first German poesy ; and classic Weimar, which represents to us the highest height of German poetry and intellectual development. And now, in these dark and heavy days, which a hard fate has allotted to us, many of us have gratefully realized how strong a power lies in our spiritual and cultural estates and how much comfort and confidence they can give us. Only the completest use of these inward powers can lead us back to health and worth ; and we must all strive doubly hard in the present time to keep the sacred fire of ideal alive

in our people, that we may not lose a precious part of our existence and our nationality.”

These are not the words of an ingrained “Diehard” militarist of the old school, but of a wise, kindly man who knows where to pay his tribute. They are words not unworthy to be spoken in the town where Goethe died.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

GERMANY AS A MILITARY POWER—THEN AND NOW

ACCORDING to the Constitution of Weimar, the President of the German Republic possesses also the Supreme Command over the Army and Navy, and to this post the greatest soldier in the country brought all the keenness of his martial spirit. To the young, new Army, Hindenburg became the great example, the possessor of all military virtues, and the symbol of past glories. He proved himself ever ready to come to the aid of any soldier with advice and help, and he placed himself upon a footing of comradeship with the Republican Army that endeared him to officers and men alike.

On May the 12th, 1925, upon the very day when he swore the oath to the Constitution, he sent the following message to the soldiers and sailors of the Republic :

“ The trust of the German people has called me to the highest position in the State. According to the Constitution I take over to-day the command of the Army and Navy, and I greet them with pride and pleasure. I have watched their development from Hanover, my place of retirement. This has steadily and truly followed the path along which alone the German people may hope to rise again : to achieve ability and success by means of stern discipline and devotion to the smallest details of duty. Its roots lie deep in the old sense of duty and sacrifice, but its dealings are for the present and the future, for the service of the people and the

State, and it is faithful to the task that the Constitution has laid upon it. I trust to the German soldiers and sailors to help me to obtain peace and prosperity for the Fatherland."

Hindenburg wished that the little standing army of the Republic should preserve the spirit that had existed amongst the pre-war regiments. These new young men were not to forget that it was for them to perpetuate the great tradition that had been handed down to them; they were to be worthy of that great host of their countrymen whose bones rested under alien soil, who had breathed their last in the service of the Fatherland. The Army never forgot Hindenburg the Field-Marshal in the personality of Hindenburg the President, and he seemed in a way to belong exclusively to them.

On April 7th, 1926, the forces were able to do him honour on the 60th anniversary of his entry into the Prussian Army. Officers of the old Army, soldiers' associations, the standing Army and even private citizens came to congratulate him on this occasion. A Colour Company of the new Army entered his house in the morning, bearing the flags of those regiments with which he had served. He met them at his door, and for the whole day these standards were set up in the great reception-room of the President's Palace. Dr. Gessler* brought the congratulations of the forces to Hindenburg, who answered :

"You will surely understand that I, an old soldier, surrounded as I am to-day with these honourable and

* Minister to the Forces.

famous symbols, under the shadow of which most of my life has been passed, remember with longing and pain the soldiers of our proud old Army. That was a people's army, which not only served its purpose of protecting the Fatherland, but which represented a place of education for the whole nation, a University which taught fulfilment of duty and patriotism. What we have lost with its disappearance we cannot judge at the present time. The new *Reichswehr*, whose representatives I see before me, has had to be built up upon other principles: it is small in strength, and instead of the duty of compulsory service, freedom to serve, or not, has been granted. But, as the new Army is connected with the old traditions of our military past, and as it has undertaken to preserve the high virtues of selfless devotion to duty, absolute love of the Fatherland and sacrificial bravery, it too has become a stronghold to support amongst our people the soldierly characteristics of the old days. I am convinced that, filled with this spirit, the new Army and Navy will be true to their oath and will faithfully perform their duty; and they will be led, in spite of the tumults of the present day, by no other feeling than that of love for the Fatherland and by the conviction that the future of the German people can best be served by quiet, unselfish work."

Hindenburg, though he built all his hopes upon the young and upon the future, still clung to the spirit of those traditions which he had so long ago been trained to honour. He could not feel towards the new order as he had felt towards the old, and the representatives of the new Army,

though conscious of his willingness to help them in their work, heard an undertone of passion in his voice when he spoke of the old Army which was not there when he spoke about the new, and in the closing words of his address he adjured them always to be worthy of the deeds of their fathers, as he confidently believed they would be. It is not the least of Hindenburg's achievements that he was able to adjust himself to the conditions of post-war Germany and to play a leading part upon the stage of affairs although his personal feelings lay so deeply rooted in the past. He was certainly completely convinced that the new soldiers could achieve no higher glory than that which emulation of their father's virtues would bestow upon them.

Over and over again, Hindenburg gave expression to his love and respect for his old comrades. Towns and districts asked him to write a few words of introduction in the volumes containing their Rolls of Honour.

"That we should strive to emulate our dead comrades is the most graceful thanks we can give them," he wrote on one such occasion.

And again, with unconquerable pride: "Victory and defeat are in the hands of God—but we, ourselves, are kings and masters of our honour."

In the "*Ehrenedenkmal für die deutsche Armee und Marine*,"* he sounded a note of hope with the words: "I have witnessed the heroic struggle of my Fatherland, but I have not believed and never shall believe that it was the death struggle."

On February the 28th, 1926, the country held its

* Monument of Honour for the German Army and Navy.

*Trauertag** in commemoration of the dead. On this solemn occasion he wrote the following words :

“ The German people think to-day, in silent sorrow, of their brothers who gave their lives in defence of their homes in the greatest of all wars. They went to their deaths for us. At the graves of our fallen, who sacrificed themselves for us all, dissension must be still. Before us in our German sorrow the holy sacrifice of those who stayed at the war stands reprovingly—they died that Germany might live. The highest strength of Germany has grown always from sorrow. While the flags are waving to-day at half-mast and while great crowds unite silently to join in worthy memorial services, the determination must take root in us to realize in truth the German saying :

“ *‘ Nimmer wird das Reich zerstört,
‘ Wenn Ihr einig seid und treu ! ’* ”†

Hindenburg’s lifelong love and devotion belonged to the old Army, and it always gave him an especial pleasure to meet the veterans who had survived from the wars of 1866 and 1870. So deeply did he feel himself bound to the soldiers, that he never omitted to accompany to the grave the body of any dead officer who had been known to him personally : and neither distance, inclement weather, nor any other hindrance, was allowed to interfere with this

* Day of Mourning.

† “ The State shall never be destroyed
If you remain united and true.”

observance, for each of these dead comrades had helped to uphold the honour of his country.

The present-day military situation in Germany is so far different from its pre-war condition that Hindenburg spoke very seriously to a foreign newspaper correspondent.

“Germany,” he said, “according to my professional viewpoint, is not even in a position to defend herself against even a small neighbouring State, for even countries like Poland and Czecho-Slovakia have a far larger standing Army than we and are secured further by means of military alliances, so that in every case we should have to stand against a far larger opposing force.”

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

POST-WAR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

OWING to the fact that the German President is elected by the voting of all the people in the country, it stands to reason that the man elected must have the support of the majority of workers of the great army of the employed. Were all these "little" people to vote solidly against any candidate for the post of President, his election would be rendered impossible. Hindenburg, whose personality rose high above class and party strife, was to the workers almost what he was to the soldiers, and they felt that one who held to the lofty ideals of co-operation and regeneration would help them, too, in the difficult times through which they had to pass. For, when unemployment is rife, when wages are low and when employers have to fight to keep their heads above water, the workers are forced to suffer for these conditions. And, when Hindenburg submitted himself as a candidate for the Presidency, a considerable part of the *Arbeitschaft** voted for him, even supporting him against Dr. Marx, the candidate jointly named by the Central parties. Just as this large section of the community saw in Ebert a man who was one of themselves, a fact which they never forgot, and which he, himself, lost no opportunity of proclaiming, so they saw in Hindenburg the rescuer of East Prussia from the horrors of Russian invasion and the man who had, in the final moment of chaos, remained at his post in the service of the country. And, although he was essentially a soldier, he possessed a great popularity

*Workers.

among the working people of genuinely pacifist post-war Germany.

When it became known that Hindenburg had accepted the candidature for the Presidency, a section of the workers of the country displayed their faith in him by sending a deputation to his house in Hanover to thank him for his acceptance. The Field-Marshal's reply was :

“ These kind words shall not echo vainly. I have always acted according to the principle : Faith for faith, trust for trust. We can only advance socially if all the working units of the nation work honourably together. What I can do, in this way, I shall do. I am a man who, with God's help, energetically carries out his will. It would be good if we could now see national and social concepts brought into close communication with each other.”

Hindenburg, in common with all uncomplicated and upright natures, was always able to find a basis of understanding with all sorts and conditions of men. He was alive to the importance to the nation of German commerce, but he did not rely simply upon the commercial “ Kings ” to achieve the necessary prosperity. No trade can flourish if it is served by disgruntled and discontented workers, and Hindenburg knew that the surest way to prevent discontent and murmuring was to ensure the best possible conditions for the labourers. Ruthless suppression of the discontented would have been the reply of a Bismarck to such murmurs : but Hindenburg showed quite another spirit in his dealings with them.

He had only one object to achieve—and that was to be achieved by mutual understanding between all sections of society.

For post-war Germany, however, exactly this understanding was the most difficult thing to achieve. The old saying that love flies out by the window when poverty enters the door applies equally well to countries as to people. The colossal burden of the war debts made it a superhuman task to keep the State above water. Wages did not increase in proportion to the cost of living, and the labourers were told that they must give of their best without hope of reward for the sake of the country and the future. Employers were forced to retrench and to economize in every possible way. Liquidations were, and still are, frequent; long credits had to be given, and the Government had to devote the whole of its abilities and powers to the preserving of the financial situation. It is not difficult to appreciate the fearful brink upon which the country trembles even to this day. There is fear in the country that, should another inflation time come, Communism would follow it. It is scarcely too much to say that had Hindenburg not been elected President, the Communist Movement would have spread to a far greater extent than it has done.

In order to pay her war debts, Germany is obliged to manufacture cheaply and to do an enormous export trade, and only by keeping every business and trade up to the highest pitch of efficiency can this be achieved. But the effort to make both ends meet has been a terrible one, and it has told most savagely upon the man with little capital and upon the workers.

Hindenburg felt deeply the need to lighten the conditions under which the labourers lived and worked. It was not very long before his name was signed below a number of Acts dealing with sociological and labour affairs. In July, 1925, the Accident Insurance Law was reformed and the Health Insurance Law was redrafted. Further enactments dealing with the Old Age Pensions and the Limitation of Child Labour were followed in December by a law regarding the Reduction of Wage Taxes. In 1926, laws were passed in connection with the Mine Workers, the Housing Question and the Protection of Older Employees.

One of the most important sociological improvements introduced during the earlier part of Hindenburg's term of office was the establishment of the *Arbeitsgerichte*.^{*} All disputes and difficulties between employers and employed are now submitted to a Tribunal consisting of a professional judge, an employer and an employee. The establishment of these courts and the improvement of the law dealing with Insurance of Workers against unemployment, which Hindenburg made law with special pleasure, served to give the workers of Germany an assurance that their claims were receiving due attention from the Government. No employer in the country can displace a labourer without proper reasons. If a man obtains a post and behaves well, he may remain in it for the rest of his life, for any unjustified dismissal would at once be righted by the *Arbeitsgericht*.

But, although the laws which were enacted between 1925-1927 did very much to bring Hindenburg's name

^{*} Court of Labour.

into even greater honour among the people, there was a more magic, more personal side of the President which attached them to him. He let them feel that he could see no difference in value between employer and employed so long as each did his duty. He, who had witnessed the political quarrels and differences of the day, had seen also the political quarrels and differences of other men who had long passed into silence. It seemed he realized the transitoriness of these things and that he had found one genuine aim to strive for, one thing at least that would live through all times. To-morrow—other men would be striving for other political ends, but the work which Hindenburg had done would stand immovable as a rock because it was above the strife of the moment. Hindenburg really cared for the future prosperity of the people, and his request that the workers of the country should help him to achieve it did not fall on deaf ears. There were exceptions, of course, for there are always men to whom "long, quiet, peaceful work," especially when it is unaccompanied by any particular advantage, makes no appeal.

But, if Hindenburg demanded that the workers should help so far as lay in their power to leave a better world for the succeeding generations, he made equal demands upon employers. "*Ich dien*," was what he said of himself and he asked no less from them. He, the soldier, realized very completely that no one who has not learnt to obey and to obey cheerfully has the right to give orders. He, himself, had obeyed, and, called to a position where he was in command, knew how to make his will enforced.

Germany's trade and commerce were, and are, her life's blood. Hindenburg recognized the need to encourage the men who were the directors of trade. They carried a very large share of public responsibility, and it was for them to devise means to improve Germany's financial status. And the fact that the whole strength of the country was needed to bring it back to some measure of life and health made it very difficult to give sufficient attention to less important questions. Unsparing and co-operative work was what was needed, and by means of it disaster might be headed off and financial ruin prevented. The great personal example set by the President, whose clear blue eyes saw nothing but the immediate duty in hand, was such that it had real effect upon all who came into personal contact with him and upon many who did not. In a wild, insistent world where everyone tried to snatch what he could for himself, where everyone craved security and none had it, he was like a stronghold, and many people were able to find courage to fight with a ruthless fate and to learn, like him, to look forward to a brighter and easier future.



HINDENBURG WITH HIS FAMILY DURING THE WAR.

From left to right: CAPTAIN VON PENTZ (son-in-law and personal adjutant), FRAU VON PENTZ (Hindenburg's younger daughter), FRAU VON HINDENBURG, PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG, and FRAU BROCKHUSEN (the General's elder daughter).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

LANDOWNERS AND THE STATE

THERE was one group of people in Germany which voted almost to a man for Hindenburg, and that was the Agricultural group—landowners and farmers, who had been seriously alarmed by the attitude of the Socialists towards property. From the disappearance of the Monarchy and the reigning princes, it was not a very far cry to the seizure of the property of the big landowner and its division into small farms and holdings. And, if large estates were split up and shared out, it did not seem impossible that smaller ones would soon share their fate. That all land should belong to the State and simply be farmed out by the Government is a definite Socialist maxim, and, although landowners whose estates were thus confiscated and divided were compensated with money, every one knows that when a family has its roots dug deeply into the soil, their farmhouse and the acres surrounding it mean everything to them. It is *their* ground, *their* property—and it would not be the same to them were it State property which they simply farmed during their lifetime. The Agriculturists of Germany were conservative. If they did not actually desire the restoration of the Monarchy, they at least desired that property should remain inviolable and that something, at least, of the old spirit should remain vested in the land.

The farmers complained that the Government inspection of their farms, and the war-time obligation to sell their produce (with the exception only of what they needed for their own households and as seed for the next year's

crops) at fixed prices, had hit them so hard that it had scarcely been possible to carry on. The measures taken to ensure the most equal and righteous distribution of foodstuffs unfortunately did nothing to help the farmer to increase his productiveness, or even to ensure that it remained at pre-war level, and the result was that many farms, at a time when every acre should have been tilled, produced fifty per cent. less food than they had done before the war. When Hindenburg took over the Supreme Command of the Armies, the Agriculturists turned to him for help, and they found sympathy and strong support. Both Hindenburg and Ludendorff urged the necessity to increase the food production and not hamper it; but, by the time when these two men stood at the head of affairs, the situation had become too serious to mend. Had the farmers been supported and encouraged to produce to their utmost capacity at the very beginning of the war, many people believe that, despite the blockade, Germany would not have suffered the bitter food distress of the years 1916-17 and 1918.

Hindenburg, who was the descendant of a family of landowners and soldiers, was, in addition, the man who had kept the country clear of the enemy, the man who had freed East Prussia and who had, as well as he could, supported the farmers in the time of war. The landowners felt that he would give them some support against the inroads which the Socialist Government seemed to be making into the rights and privileges which had so long belonged to the farmers.

It must always be remembered that Germany is a country consisting of many states, and, although they are

united, each state guards jealously its own characteristics and its own borders. It might almost be said that, since the disappearance of the Monarchy, there have been two opposing streams of opinion in the country, two conflicting ideas. The first was in favour of uniting and of centralizing all power in the Central Government, while the other saw in the preservation of the internal independence of the states the best means of furthering the ultimate ends of the German *Reich* and the best way of keeping the citizens of each district contented and happy. Hindenburg was the man who stood in the centre of this conflict. He declared that his respect was given to the historical and that he did not believe in a levelling which would have a deadening effect on all the states. Each must be allowed to preserve its characteristics, but he wished it to be clearly understood that, though each district might be left in peace to go its way quietly in matters of internal policy, this freedom must never be abused and must never be allowed to prejudice the unity of the whole *Reich*. A few days after Hindenburg became President, he made the following announcement :

“ To a large extent, we have to thank the independent life of the German States for the many-sided and fruitful intellectual development of our people. We should dry up the best sources of our culture, if we violently laid hands upon the independence of these countries. You may rest assured that I shall always make it my business to protect the just independence of the separate German States and to accede to their desires and their needs whenever I am able.”

Small wonder, then, that the landowners and farmers of these very States turned trustfully to the new President to support their claims. Hindenburg bound, in their eyes, the stormy, uncertain present to the peaceful solidity of the past; and they felt greatly relieved to see a man who represented the old order of things taking their part when new laws came to be framed with regard to matters agricultural. The Socialists in the Government seemed to be in favour of the breaking up of large properties, but Hindenburg proclaimed that property was inviolable; and so landowners hoped that he would be able to influence the way things went so far as they were concerned. They saw in him a man who would represent the old order and help it to find a common level with the new; for the conservative landowners and farmers were also ready to pull their weight and to help as best they could to restore Germany to her lost position in the world.

Hindenburg's personal interest in the land and its development was deep-rooted and sincere. He knew how great a measure of responsibility rests upon the shoulders of every man who owns a few acres of land, and that he believed the agriculturists to be worthy of this responsibility is evidenced in some words he wrote in the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* on August the 15th, 1924:

"I know that the German agriculturists will continue now, as previously, to place their whole strength at the service of the community. The heavy burdens which rest upon our greatly tested country, and especially upon the landowner, must and shall not be allowed to rob him of his courage. He must lead his country-

men with his unyielding good example as he so often has in hard times of the past.

“*Per aspera ad astra!*”

“V. HINDENBURG.”

Hindenburg's personal connection with landowners and farmers had always been very pleasant. In whatever State he had resided, he had always made friends amongst these people, had entertained them and had accepted their cordially-offered hospitality. For men of the land, for the ploughmen, shepherds and foresters, he had the greatest possible admiration and respect, and many humble peasants throughout Germany could tell of how they had had long conversations about cattle, crops, timber and hunting, with a certain “*feiner Herr*”* who brought both knowledge and intelligence to bear upon the subject under discussion and who was always interested to hear of their own little troubles and successes. It cannot be too much emphasized that Hindenburg was always glad to speak to any man, from the highest to the lowest, and that he was as much at ease with cottagers as with his equals. He had that ease and simplicity of manner which an Englishman nearly always possesses, but which was a great exception in the case of a German brought up and educated as was Hindenburg. He was a great stickler for punctuality and etiquette in the Army, and was renowned as an iron martinet who demanded the same high standards from those around him as he set for himself; but, when his uniform was laid aside and he retired into private life, he revealed a large and catholic

* Gentleman.

attitude of mind which was little short of amazing when his training and heritage are considered.

In particular Hindenburg made many friends among the green-uniformed foresters of Germany. These men, whose lives are spent in the open and whose business it is to care for and protect the deer and other game of the countryside, had also a very particular feeling for Hindenburg, who was so keen a huntsman. A German forester thinks as much of the preserving and protection of the animals under his care as of shooting them, and one of his maxims "that an animal must be killed with the least possible pain and distress" might be taken to heart by the huntsmen of other countries.

Hindenburg shot his first stag near Magdeburg after he became a Commanding General. At that time, when he hunted, he made it his habit to lodge with an old ranger and his sister, who lived in the middle of a wood. These days spent in the open and in such freedom and peace were greatly appreciated by the General who worked so hard. During the years of the war, whenever he could allow himself a few days' leave, these were mostly spent with old foresters in pursuit of deer or hare.

Some bad years came after the war. The winter of 1923 was so hard that almost fifty per cent. of the wild animals died—all the care in the world did not avail to save them. The foresters therefore made an appeal that shooting should be strictly limited in order to give time for recovery.

With the departure of the Kaiser, the sport of hunting suffered to no little extent. The new Government had to concern itself with matters other than the preservation

of game, and there was no one at the helm to pay any attention to the needs of the foresters. For the most part, too, the Socialists regarded hunting as a privilege of the wealthy, and it seemed more than likely that rude hands would soon be laid upon the cherished ideals and traditions of the woodsmen. Then Hindenburg became President, and he, who was a member of the old aristocracy, and a great huntsman, upon whose coat of arms appeared the head of a buffalo and a hind standing under a tree, became a symbol to all rangers that their work would again be remembered in high places and that their traditions would not be heedlessly trampled underfoot.

Hindenburg's election to the Presidency served more than anything else could have done, therefore, to free the country people from their feelings of uncertainty and anxiety as to their future status. It must be realized, also, that Communism had gained a strong hold in Germany, and when the landowners saw the mines being drawn into the control of the Socialist Government, and the land about to follow it into such control, they developed a deep-seated fear regarding the future of their own personal possessions.

It has yet to be proved whether State-owned land would be as carefully guarded and tilled as privately-owned estates. It is certainly doubtful, for a human being is always more inclined to work for himself and his own heirs than he is for "the State." The State, at its very utmost, can be only a conception, perhaps an ideal. In the minds of most men, the State is only a vague thing which means much less to them than the two acres of ground which they possess. Hindenburg, who had

passed from one state of affairs to another, stood between the two, trying to unite them in one cause and to keep what was best in both. For this reason the country people clung to him as to a sheet-anchor. They were the ones who knew, as he did, the value of quiet work, of slow growth and long maturing. They were wise in the lore of Nature, and the heritage of the fields was theirs, and they trusted that Hindenburg, who also loved the land, would help them through the trials of the moment.

CHAPTER NINETEEN
UNITY OF A NATION

HINDENBURG was not only the man who was able to draw all the sections of the community into a clear understanding of each other, but he was able to bring even the different countries which are included in the German *Reich* into a closer union. This he achieved not by means of political intrigue but by the exercise of his own personal influence in each country. His visits to every different part of Germany served always to increase the cordiality between himself and the population, and it is well known that nothing serves better to smooth away difficulties than the exercise of a strong personal influence. In this connection, Hindenburg deserves all the praise that can be bestowed upon him, because he was always able to see the best side of the different peoples which compose Germany. Most Prussians, and especially Prussians of the military type, are unable to see outside the boundaries of their own country. The world, for them, consists of Prussia and the rest—and, in their eyes, the rest compares badly with Prussia.

Prussian discipline and organization made Germany what she was. The Prussian soldier was the backbone of the marvellous pre-war Army. The Prussian officer was certainly the most efficient military man in the world. And the country where these men were born and bred was a country of fertility and thriving industry, a country of perfectly kept towns and well-tilled fields. The watchword was efficiency in things both great and small. Indeed, were the definition of genius as an infinite capa-

city for taking pains to be regarded as a tenable one, then it would have to be conceded that about seventy-five per cent. of all Prussians were geniuses. In addition, Prussians did not "let themselves go" on occasions of rejoicing in the same manner as did the southern races of Germany, where more simple and ingenuous populations enjoyed their high days and holidays with an unrestraint which was vaguely distasteful to the Prussians. The sharper, clearer speech of the north was contrasted with the softer, slower tones of the south Germans, and the latter were characterized as "*plump*." To this day, there is some lack of real cordiality between north and south Germans, and it is therefore doubly remarkable that Hindenburg, both by heritage and training a Prussian, was always able to live happily in the south. He liked the Rhinelanders and the Bavarians, the men of Baden and the men of Swabia. In his memoirs, he bears testimony to the fact that he found much to like in the Poles—an almost incredible statement to be made by a Prussian.

Prussia, of course, feels that it has a very special claim upon Hindenburg, not only because he was born there, but because he had defeated the Russians at Tannenberg and at the Masovian Lakes, and driven the rude, alien foot from the invaded territory. In the year 1924, before there had been any talk of Hindenburg becoming President, he laid the foundation-stone of the National Monument, and, after the ceremony, made a tour through East Prussia. On this occasion, the stiff population cast its reserve to the winds, and the Field-Marshal was greeted with boisterous cheers and acclamations from

young and old. Crowds lined the streets down which he had to drive, flags waved, houses were garlanded, and bands played in his honour. And all this happened in Prussia—where the people do not lightly show their feelings, and, in the following year, the East Prussians gave a huge majority vote in his favour at the elections for the Presidency. East Prussia will also never forget that Hindenburg and his volunteers held at bay the efforts of the Bolshevik Army to intrude into the unfortunate province, and although a part of it has been separated from the *Reich* by Polish territory, it remains German to the heart's core.

But, if Prussians had the special claim on Hindenburg that he was their countryman, the men of the Rhineland had also a very deep feeling for the President. These had watched the progress of the war in France with an anxious fear, lest the enemy should make his way into their fair country. It was not only the soldiers in the trenches who fought and died to protect the country at their backs, it was the energetic and able leadership of Hindenburg that made it possible to keep the enemy at bay. The Field-Marshal had also lived in the Rhine country as Chief of the General Staff of the 8th Army at Coblenz. Then, he had been attracted, despite himself, by the gaiety of the people, although he could not quite accustom himself to follow their light-hearted treatment of what, to him, were matters of weight. In 1920 he wrote a few hard words about the mooted separation of the Rhine country from Prussia, which he described as "frivolity and gross ingratitude." When he wrote those words, his mind doubtless went back to

the year 1918, when he came back from France with his Armies. It was in 1920, when he visited Duisberg, that, with his eyes fixed upon the mighty river, he said to a friend: "No one knows what feelings move me at this moment, when I see the Rhine again for the first time since 1918."

Speaking later in the day to the crowds which had assembled to honour him, the President, he spoke words which went home to all who heard them.

"To-day, for the first time since the great war, I have stood again on the shores of our German Rhine. Each of you will understand that I have been deeply moved. The Rhine is our river of fate. It belonged to us when we were united—we lost it so soon as we became disunited, therefore, let the Rhine always be a warning to us to hold together."

Shortly after Hindenburg became President, the people of the Rhineland celebrated the completion of the thousandth year of their union with the German *Reich*. In all the beautiful villages and stately towns by the river, the people made holiday in their own happy, characteristic way. They drank the wine from their vineyards and sang their famous old songs. Hindenburg, who never let pass any opportunity to say a word in season, wrote to the population of the Rhine country.

"I send the greetings of the other peoples of the German *Reich* to their brothers and sisters by the

German Rhine, on the occasion of the Thousand Year Festival. The idea of celebrating the completion of the thousand years of union between the *Reich* and the Rhineland arose in the minds of the Rhineland people. In all these celebrations, the contemporary race must be conscious that they are the responsible representatives of a mighty past. The whole living power of labour and culture which blooms in the Rhineland to-day rests upon the achievements of ancestors over a period stretching back for more than a thousand years. During the whole of this time, the Rhineland, as a boundary district, has over and over again had to suffer the onslaught of the historical storms of the world. Thus a population has arisen, which, despite its complete devotion to the affairs of the mind and in spite of a healthy joyousness of disposition, has yet been able to develop a proper share of that true German seriousness and political strength which are necessary to combat the many trials of the present day. In difficult hours, the Rhineland held firmly and faithfully to its historical union with Prussia and to its ties with the great German *Reich*. The whole German people wish to thank the Rhinelanders for this endurance and this devotion to the main aims of the *Reich*. It is my unshakeable belief that if all Germans remain true to these virtues, the sacred hour of freedom will soon strike for the Rhineland. We shall none of us rest until this aim has been achieved. God, who has always helped us in the past in the hour of distress, will also help us now !

"VON HINDENBURG."

In 1920 he visited many Rhineland towns, including Essen, Bonn, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Rheydt and Krefeld. He found himself in close touch with the people, who gave him a wonderful welcome, especially in those areas which had recently been evacuated by occupation troops. Hindenburg appealed everywhere to the people to work in unity and harmony for the sake of the whole *Reich*, and reiterated his assurance that he would always respect and uphold the historical independence of the different districts, so long as they, in their turn, were willing to contribute their best will towards the re-establishment of the whole country and would uphold its honour and dignity in the eyes of the world.

In August, 1925, Hindenburg visited Munich, the capital town of Bavaria, that country of proud and independent people who wished to keep their independence. Here, every one regarded the centralizing and levelling ideas of the Socialists with dislike and disgust. The Bavarians, who saw in Hindenburg a member of the old order, and who felt that they could trust him to support their claims for independence, gave him a rapturous welcome.

Hindenburg was welcomed to Munich with a speech made by Dr. Held, the *Ministerpräsident* of Bavaria, to which he made the following reply :

“ I thank you, *Herr Ministerpräsident*, for the kind words of welcome which you have spoken in the name of the Bavarian *Staatsregierung** and for the good wishes you have expressed towards myself and my policy. . . .

* Local Government.

I have said that I consider the independent life of the different countries is important to the intellectual and social development of the State and have therefore proclaimed that I shall give due heed to their especial wishes. Please consider my visit to Munich to-day, as an expression of my great desire to stand in close relationship with the different countries and to develop a direct intercourse with their leading men, so that I may know their personal opinions. Intimate co-operation between the State and the countries is essential, if we are to lead our country back to its former high position. I am glad to hear, from your words, that the desire for unity and the will to work for the common welfare are alive and strong in Bavaria. In the hope that we shall be able, as I believe we shall, to meet the future in a close co-operation together, and with the sincere hope that a happy Bavaria may live in a strong and united Germany, I thank you once more for your good wishes, which I heartily reciprocate."

In May, 1926, Hindenburg visited the northern city of Hamburg. Here, he made a tour of the harbour and the river Elbe on board the steamer *Deutschland*, and he expressed his great pleasure to be able to travel on this ship, which he regarded as an example of German workmanship, "that workmanship which shall bring us back to honour." In the evening he was entertained at a great banquet in the Hall of the *Rathaus*, and in reply to a speech from Dr. Petersen, the Lord Mayor he once more spoke out upon the lines of his favourite policy.

“ I thank you from my heart for the friendly greeting you have given me, and for the renewed honour which is being done me by the Senate of the free Hanse-town of Hamburg. I should like to thank all those who gave me so pleasant a welcome in the streets and in the harbour to-day, because I recognize in these greetings, from so many different sections of the population, a confirmation of what you, *Herr Bürgermeister*, have just said about Hamburg’s loyalty to the German State, and I accept this testimony as a recognition to the State of the common feelings and desires of all Germans. You were right to remind us that this spirit is no sudden apparition which has appeared here in the last ten years, but that Hamburg and its sister Hanse-towns have been illuminated throughout their history with this idea of united Germany. The Hanseatic policy was always a German policy. Hamburg was always a bridge which bound our country with the world ; it was the centre where all the different threads of German commerce were gathered before they passed out into the foreign world. So I have always felt with you during the years of the war and the difficult post-war times, what it must have meant to you to see the great commercial harbour of Hamburg, formerly lively with the shipping of the whole world, lying empty and deserted ; to know the great, proud Merchant Service fleet delivered up, except for a poor remainder, and to see all the wide foreign connections, which bound Hamburg with the trade of the world, torn asunder. But the old Hanseatic spirit has shown itself again here. I am able to recognize and admire to-day the tenacious



Sport & General.

PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG IN THE GROUNDS OF HIS PALACE.

will and the courage with which Hamburg started the work of rebuilding, and which is so remarkable an example to the whole of Germany of what German strength and German energy can achieve. As I sailed round the harbour to-day I was able to see with satisfaction that the old Hamburg has come to life again and is once more approaching her earlier position as a centre of shipping and trade. That which has been achieved here in a few years, in years of need and poverty, represents German work and German achievement at its highest, born of a firm belief in the German future and carried on in a fine responsibility towards the German people and their country. This spirit, which unites the daring of the seaman to the activity of a widely experienced salesman, is a Hanseatic characteristic and is also the character of Hamburg ; upon it rests the history of your town and it embodies that desire to remain independent to which you, *Herr Bürgermeister*, have just now especially referred. I can understand that you are proud of this independent Government of yours and that you see in it the deepest roots of your strength. In the future, too, Hamburg must fulfil the great task of being Germany's intermediary in world trade, and I believe, with you, that it will carry out this task in the best manner, if it be left the form of Government which it has possessed for centuries. It must, however, be the aim of all of us, while exploiting to the utmost the different capabilities and talents of the various German races and districts, to unite our full strength to form a strong, united and self-contained State ; only thus shall we be able to maintain ourselves

in the world and make a lighter future for our people. With this wish, I raise my glass to the well-being and prosperity of Hamburg and to the happy future of our great country : I drink, then, to the free Hanse-town, Hamburg, and to our whole nation ! ”

So impressed was Hindenburg with his visit to Hamburg and with what he saw there, that he wrote the following letter to the Senate :

“ I shall always remember with the greatest possible pleasure my visit to Hamburg and the many wonderful impressions which it gave me. I was able to see the town and the harbour of Hamburg in its untiring work, and I saw how Hamburg, inspired by a single idea, labours actively to advance to its old place. I ask you to be convinced that my most eager good wishes will always accompany the people of Hamburg along the path they have chosen to follow. I feel I can scarcely sufficiently thank you and the Senate for the festive reception and the citizens for the signs of friendly welcome which they accorded me. I would ask you to give a special word of thanks to the police for their exemplary bearing in the carrying out of very difficult duties, a bearing which won my special admiration.”

Hindenburg made a point of visiting the capitals of all the German States, and everywhere he expressed his desire that each should help in the work of co-operation and revitalizing, while he constantly promised that all the particular little needs and desires of the individual

countries should be allowed proper scope. In October, 1926, he visited Braunschweig and again appealed for co-operation.

“I willingly give you the assurance,” he said, “that I see in the preservation of the historically developed characteristics of the German countries and the independent life that is founded upon them, one of the strongest roots of German culture and national life. The existence of our people is able to unfold richly and beautifully because it is fed by so many different streams. But this individual unfolding must not be allowed to lead to disunion; it must carry us strongly towards co-operation. Only thus can we attain the re-birth of our social, cultural and national position. For this reason I am especially pleased to hear from your own mouths that you will serve the German State with the best of your powers.”

So an old soldier tirelessly travelled and spoke in all the German States, and everywhere he went he made his influence felt. From the foregoing speeches, it will be seen that the iron-bound martinet, the hater of politics and diplomacy, had forced himself to grapple with the most acute problem of the moment and that he had achieved something like a solution for the time being.

Practically every phase of the history of the German nation had revealed attempts to unite the different countries, to form them into one compact whole. The fact that, formerly, all these countries were ruled by kings and princes, each fiercely jealous of his honour and his

powers, prevented these efforts from ever gaining a very complete success. Bismarck, a man of iron, was able to forge the unwieldy links into an apparently strong chain ; but in the hour of need, the chain broke once more. With the disappearance of the Monarchy and the reigning princes of the different States, a union might have been effected, but, unfortunately, the different countries were still parted by the varying political views and social aims which actuated their populations. There seemed to be no way of reaching a settlement, no way of conciliating the different factions. At the death of Ebert, as has already been shown, it seemed more than likely that Germany would be faced with an even darker period of disruption and disaccord. And what was there to stand between the nation and that black abyss ? Who was capable of directing and controlling the conflicting feelings and conflicting interests ?

There was one old man found in the country ; one old man who refused to yield to the burden of his years, to be broken up by private sorrow, to be embittered by the total disappearance of all that mattered to him or to refuse the final service which he could render to his country. The winds of chance might blow coldly, storms might buffet, and a new, rough influence be at work in the land. But it was German land, and he saw one way to save it, to secure for it a safer future. " Long, quiet, peaceful work," and co-operation were the things for which he asked. He stood up and demanded in no uncertain tones that each man, whether his lot were cast in high places or in low, should give what he could of goodwill and labour to the redemption of the wounded nation.

Nor was he content to stand at the head of affairs and give his orders and make his official appearances as they were prescribed. There are those in Germany to-day who characterize Hindenburg as "a man of straw," and who cannot see what this same "man of straw" has achieved.

In all the countries of the *Reich*, he made it a point to establish a personal bond and a personal connection with the people and their local rulers. He towered above the petty strifes of the moment, in place of a party slogan he gave them all a broader watchword, a wider, purer ideal, and he led them by the light of his own example.

That Hindenburg completely succeeded in his efforts to unite the country must still remain open to question. It is hardly possible to form even an adequate judgment of what exactly he has achieved. The point to be borne in mind is that he was able to establish a personal connection, in most cases a happy one, between himself and the various countries; so that at least that slender link might hold each of these countries attached, through himself, to the whole State of which he had been appointed the head.

It must not be forgotten that the long journeys and the speeches and the ceaseless burdens of State affairs rested upon the shoulders of a very old man, and it is more than likely that his long toll of years contributed very considerably towards the weight of influence he was able to exercise. If he, at his age, could work so untiringly at a gigantic task, it was surely not too much to expect people who were young and strong to help him to

achieve the aim for which he was striving. He was a very old man, but the fire of youth had not been quenched in him, and his hopes for the future and his confidence that Germany would redeem her lost place from the limbs of the past were the things that kept him young. Certainly, some of his contemporaries might permit themselves to call him "a man of straw," but it is more than likely that posterity will call him a great one.

CHAPTER TWENTY

HINDENBURG AS DIPLOMAT

HINDENBURG was a soldier, but he possessed a far wider adaptability than most soldiers are able to acquire. It had been an understood thing that he should adopt a military career, and he, himself, had not been attracted to any other profession. Heredity, training, education and environment had strengthened his natural inclinations, and, because he was so completely devoted to his calling, he rose to the very height of his profession. He cared for nothing else in the world. He read historical and military works and gave the whole of his being to the development of his talents to their utmost. A great patriot, he regarded the Army as the very life of the country, its all in all, and when it ceased to exist, he must have felt almost as if Germany had ceased to exist. Robbed of his great absorption in life, he was able to give his attention to the future, but this forced him to study politics, and finally to enter them. The soldier was practically obliged to become a new man and to build up his hopes for the future with tools which he had never learned how to use.

Perhaps the disappearance of the Army was no bad thing for the development of his powers. Had he still been able to devote his attention to matters of military interest and importance, he would scarcely have been able to think out that policy which is known as the "Hindenburg Linie." As will have been seen, this was simply to unite the country within itself by means of a process of uniting all the people through conciliation.

That he should have thought along the lines of conciliation and pacification would argue that he could never have possessed the iron ideas of Bismarck, despite his own statement in his *Aus meinem Leben*, when he tells us that a State run according to the maxims of Bismarck had always appealed to him as an ideal. Bismarck succeeded in uniting the different countries and making them into a compact whole. The German Empire was his dream, which he was able to make reality. The work which Bismarck did, however, lived only for a few years; it was not proof against the weapons of "outrageous fortune." The work which Hindenburg has done is not so spectacular. He established no Empire and he did not stand as a controlling force at the head of a vast organization which he himself had created. His person was not surrounded by the pomp and ceremony of Court life: he was simply a black-coated President—the representative of a republic.

His influence, however, in all states and among all grades of society, was little short of extraordinary. His all-enduring patience enabled him to give an interested attention even to the dull matters of daily routine and to the mass of details which came under his notice. During the war, when all kinds of people wrote to him under the flimsiest pretext (and there were people who wrote to tell him that they had just drunk his health, or that they had named their new baby "Paul" in his honour!) he made no complaint. He and his secretaries sifted the wheat from the chaff, and sometimes in his rare moments of rest he would reply to some of his overwhelming number of correspondents. When he became President

of the German Republic, he made it a rule to deal personally with his correspondence. Appeals for help and advice reached him from all over the country. It would have been impossible for one man to reply to all these and to investigate the different appeals, but, when it was within his power to assist an applicant for help, the opportunity to do so was never allowed to slip away.

One of the most difficult of Hindenburg's tasks was to unite the two different streams of opinion in Germany with regard to foreign relationships. Nationally-minded people were in favour of concentrating on home affairs and of giving every ounce of mental and physical power to the re-establishment of the different institutions of national life. Amongst these were many who regarded the terms of the Versailles Treaty as definitely unjust, for they could see that their children would still have to suffer and to pay for a war with which they had had nothing to do. Germans, however, are people who face facts—and the population as a whole settled down to make the best of a bad job with surprisingly little rancour and bitterness. They settled to work and to use what powers they possessed to improve the general circumstances of the country, and it is certain that their efforts to retrieve their unhappy past were observed with no little admiration by their former enemies. The British Armies of Occupation on the Rhine would be able to testify to the friendly attitude of the people. Everyone in Germany hated the presence of foreign soldiers in their country, and particularly because the occupying troops remained for so long a period after the war was over; but they did not show discourtesy to the Englishmen on the shores of

the Rhine. In a very short time, indeed, the population was on definitely friendly terms with the British soldiers. There was an astonishing absence of ill-feeling which did credit to both races, but the Germans who thought nationally were sorry that the occupation lasted so long a time, and objected especially to the coloured troops brought into their country by the French.

Opposed to this way of thinking was the attitude of those who wished to conciliate the French, the English, and indeed the whole world by means of an undignified policy which cast all self-respect to the winds. It is, of course, no bad thing for any country to stand well with foreign powers, and friendly relations are good for trade and commerce ; and, it was upon commerce that Germany founded her highest hopes for future prosperity. But when friendship has to be bought at the price of self-respect and honour, then it is too dearly bought. No nation in the world, and especially one which has lost a war, can hope to gain anything by a process of self-abasement. Many of the protagonists of the "conciliate the foreigners" policy were Jews. The Jew in Germany had for centuries been downtrodden, ignored and insulted. The aristocrats of the old school openly showed their abhorrence of the race, and the middle and lower classes followed the lead given them. But the Jews went quietly about their business. Later, when birth and breeding ceased to count for anything, money could buy high places and that forceful intelligence and skill which have always distinguished the Jews, could serve to keep what their money had bought. These and many others, then, were the originators of the "conciliation"

movement. They hoped that something might be gained from such a policy. And these "conciliators" had no sense of belonging to the nation, they had no idea of working for the common welfare of the country. They made a show of patriotism where there was something to be achieved by being patriotic, but they had no intention of helping anyone except themselves. The people, therefore, who thought along national lines were doubly bitter against the "conciliators" because their ranks contained so many persons who might on occasions feign patriotism, but who never felt it.

The nationally-minded acclaimed Hindenburg and his policy of inter-state understanding and his repeated requests to all classes to work for the rehabilitation of the country from within was eagerly accepted by them. Indeed, at one time, the Nationalists claimed Hindenburg as a member of their party on the grounds of this expression of opinion, but he denied their right to do so, because he would not consent to work with any one party against another. He eschewed all party politics both before and after he became President; though we are bound to acknowledge that he was out of sympathy with those who wished to conciliate the rest of the world. He wished to stand well with the foreigner, and his dealings with the ambassadors of various powers widened this desire—although they never showed any tendency towards that servility recommended by certain politicians in Germany.

In June, 1925, Hindenburg received Mr. Schurmann, the newly-appointed Ambassador of the United States, in order that he might present his credentials. Mr. Schur-

mann stated that it was the desire of America to cultivate the friendliest relations with Germany, and that it gave him very great pleasure to follow the instructions given him by his Government. He went on to say that although the world was in a state of peace, yet it was not possible to enjoy the benefits of peace, because the spectres of fear and mistrust still interfered with such enjoyment. It was not the intention of America to interfere with European questions and so he would refrain from expressing any opinion upon political matters then under discussion. He would, however, say that he considered Germany's efforts to establish a better understanding with her late opponents were such that they offered a good chance of improving the general outlook. He finished with the words :

“With deep admiration for that which Germany has contributed towards civilization in the past, and with firm belief in the capacity of the German people to overcome their present difficulties, I have the honour, your Excellency, to present to you the best wishes of the President and the Government of the United States of America for the well-being and prosperity of Germany.”

Hindenburg thanked the Ambassador, in a few dignified words, for his good wishes, and also expressed the desire that Germany and America might preserve their friendly relationship.

“Rest assured,” he said finally, “that I and the German Government, especially in view of the many tokens of

friendship that Germany has received from the United States in these last difficult years, are also actuated by the same intentions as your Government. We shall do all that lies in our power to lighten the execution of the many duties with which your responsible office is involved. Besides the extensive commercial connections which bind Germany and the United States of America, our countries have always been attached by strong intellectual ties. I do not doubt that you, as former student of three German Universities, as a Professor of world renown, and as President for many years of the famous Cornell University (which has already sent us a most excellent American representative in the person of the former Ambassador, Mr. Andrew D. Withe), will possess a very perfect understanding of the cultural and intellectual relationship between America and Germany. Your Excellency's comment upon the unsatisfactory state of affairs in Europe and your sympathetic valuation of the new steps taken by the German Government to try and establish a better understanding between the nations, is a proof that you possess a warm-hearted appreciation for the political needs and the honourable intentions of the German people to achieve a true and lasting peace. I take this opportunity to express my most hearty thanks for the good wishes of the President and the Government of the United States of America. And I welcome you most heartily in the name of the German Government."

It was also in the month of June, 1925, that Dr. Frank, the Austrian Ambassador, presented his credentials to the

President of Germany. Dr. Frank stated that the unbroken powers of the German people acted as a spur to the Austrians in the crises with which they also were faced and gave them much comfort with regard to the future.

“We look,” replied Hindenburg, “with brotherly eyes upon the friend and neighbour, who, with unshakeable courage and dogged labour, defies the difficulties with which she is confronted in the rebuilding of her house. The noble characteristics of mind and heart which have always distinguished the Austrians confirm us in our steady belief that the good wishes which I and the German people entertain for the future of Austria, will certainly be fulfilled. The deeply rooted feeling of community which is enshrined in the hearts of all Germans on each side of the boundary forms an indestructible tie and a valuable possession which (as is my sincerest wish) must have its effect in communal work upon all spheres of life. “Please be assured that you will receive unreserved support from me and from the German Government in this common work. I welcome you most cordially, in the name of the German nation.”

In October, 1926, Lord d'Abernon left Berlin after having held the office of British Ambassador for a period of six years. Hindenburg saw his departure with great regret, for he had always done everything possible to further friendship between England and Germany. In a farewell speech, Hindenburg thanked him for the great services he had rendered, and appealed through him to

England and the rest of the world for a better understanding to be founded amongst all European nations. His welcome of Sir Ronald Lindsay, who followed Lord d'Abernon, contained a similar note of dignified appeal.

Thus, Hindenburg has personally done all he can to try and re-establish cordiality between his country and the Allies, and it cannot be said that his efforts were attended with ill-success.

The ambassadors, themselves, did all they could to meet his efforts half-way. In the presence of Hindenburg, no one could maintain that he acted as a militarist; he never revealed any of the teeth and claws that the foreign Press predicted he would reveal when it became known that he had been elected President. From the day when he swore the Oath of the Constitution in the presence of the assembled *Reichstag*, the one-time Field-Marshal showed only a desire to establish a solid and lasting peace. His conduct caused the murmurs and the fears to die away—for it proved conclusively that the man of war was also capable of being a man of peace.

An American paper expressed what very many other foreign papers stated more or less strongly, when it printed the following paragraph, at the time when Hindenburg was elected to the Presidency of the German Republic :

“The German people cannot forego the responsibility for Hindenburg's triumph and its consequences for Germany and the world. They had the consequences clearly before them. . . . In the eyes of the world, this German choice turns back the hand of progress

upon the dial of time. It is a declaration that the German spirit has not changed. The alarm bells ring in France and Central Europe, and their echo will be heard across the North Sea and the Channel."

And the personality of Hindenburg and his quiet way of going about his business stilled these "alarm bells" and silenced every voice that was raised against him in foreign lands. Certainly, all was not tumult and fury in every foreign country over this fateful election, for, as Senator Borah (in April, 1925) wrote :

"I do not believe that the result of the election should arouse great excitement. I do not doubt that national feeling and national spirit will be born again in Germany. If these, however, should be guided into the right path, they will act helpfully, and I feel that this will happen. . . . I think that other countries would do better to understand that the German nation has the right to choose the man it wishes, and that, until the facts speak otherwise, no one has the right to doubt that the German people are acting upon correct principles and are following a proper policy."

The following paragraph appeared in the Swedish *Nation* in April, 1925 :

"Hindenburg was the saviour of his country. He accomplished the most brilliant military deed of the World War when he checked the advance of the Russian Steam-roller and thereby freed the lands of the Baltic Sea from the yoke of Asia. That was a victory for

European and world culture. But, in addition to this, he achieved in November, 1918, the great deed that Germany will never forget. When the fortunes of war forsook the German arms, when the flags had to be furled and the Kaiser went to Holland, he led the Army home. His authority was the only one which was strong enough for this deed ; and in achieving it he spared the country much misery. Deeds like this are never forgotten by a people. It is one of the things which make it to be understood why the people have made a choice in which the politically clever of this world detect political immaturity. The choice of the German people is perhaps not clever, because it can cause mistrust among their foreign opponents. But it is to be hoped that these countries, which fought for democracy, will permit even a defeated country to choose as its head the man whom it wishes to appoint."

Another Swedish paper, however, the *Social Democrat*, took a decidedly different view :

"The election of Hindenburg," it wrote, "is the conquest of the German Government by Nationalism and Militarism. It brings an incalculable element of unrest into European politics."

In Switzerland, the paper *La Suisse* commented more fitly upon the election of Hindenburg :

"Curious and wonderful fate of a soldier, who, without wishing it, has united in his person all the hopes and

all the good faith of a whole country ! Of such a man, one may believe what one will, but a chief who, without the exercise of manœuvre or tricks, but simply by the power of his patriotism, alone represents victory in a defeated country, deserves that even a former enemy should trust him, or at least that they should await what he will do."

After Hindenburg had been President a few months, the *Daily News** wrote that events had not justified the fears which his election had naturally caused in England, and that Englishmen must accord him all the admiration which he had undoubtedly earned. This paper further praised the skill, moderation, and dignified bearing he had shown ever since he had been appointed President.

On the 1st of January, 1926, the annual reception of the foreign ambassadors by the President, gave the other countries an opportunity to express their goodwill towards Hindenburg. This yearly reception is a stately affair and is attended with great ceremony. At midday the procession of ambassadorial cars rolls up to the principal entrance of the President's Palace, and the uniformed representatives of the foreign countries make their way to the magnificent reception-hall, where the President, supported by his Chancellor and Foreign Minister, receives them. One by one, in order of rank, these foreigners, in their coloured uniforms, approach Hindenburg, who, by contrast, appears in the plain black and white of evening dress, relieved only by a few orders.

* November 2nd, 1925.

On these occasions he wears the ribbon and star of the Order of the Black Eagle, the order *Pour le Merite*, and the Star of the Iron Cross—that “*Blücherkreuz*” which no man has worn, with the exception of Blücher and Hindenburg, and which no one else will ever wear.

In 1926, the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, the Papal Nuncio, expressed in the French language the good wishes of the collective nations. Dressed in his magnificent vestments, and wearing the jewelled mitre of his office, he yet could not dwarf the dignity of the plainly-clad President, whose giant stature certainly needed no outward pomp to make it impressive. The Nuncio expressed the sincere wish that the efforts to obtain good feeling between all nations would be crowned with success, and complimented Hindenburg upon his conduct of affairs of state and upon the personal influence he had been able to exercise upon his countrymen.

“The Diplomatic Corps, whose voice I once more have the honour to be,” he said, “brings its warmest good wishes for the new year to the German people, who, under your wise leadership, are working in the most admirable way to achieve their peaceful rehabilitation; and we pray that God in His eternal love and inexhaustible goodness may, through His providence, bring these wishes to fulfilment.”

Hindenburg’s reply echoed this hope.

“You spoke,” he replied, “of the important happenings which took place upon the political stage during this past year, during the first months of my taking office.

I hope, with you, that the wishes of all people and especially the expectation of the still deeply depressed German population, will not be disappointed ; with you, I hope in God's name that the seeds sown in an honest endeavour to reach an understanding will soon spring up into a true and full peace. The German people, whose hearts are deeply impregnated with the living truth that only justice, morality and freedom are the foundation-stones upon which the mutual understanding of all people can be built and developed, will unsparingly work on at the peaceful rebuilding of its own national life and at the requirements and needs of peace. This alone can advance and raise the culture and commerce of the world. May the New Year, into which we have just passed, see our common wishes for a better understanding among the peoples, brought to a living reality !”

In his dealings with foreign powers or their representatives, Hindenburg always insisted upon Germany's rights to have perfect freedom in the conduct of her home affairs, and the necessity of this freedom to the peaceful development not only of the German peoples but of the whole world. He always upheld the dignity of the German name, and pointed out the debt which the world owed to Germany in many intellectual spheres. His own dignity and simplicity and his manner of going straight to the point, rather than beating about the bush, were qualities which impressed all the foreign ambassadors. These men, well versed in the arts of diplomacy and in the knowledge of what to say in order to conceal that which it might be pleasanter to hide than

proclaim, acknowledged that Hindenburg could achieve quite as much to establish good faith and understanding with his more downright and unadorned methods as they were able to achieve. There was never anything spectacular in the work which Hindenburg did as President, but that which he constantly tried to attain he has at last in part been able to reach. "Germany shall and must recapture her place of honour in the world." That was what he had said, and that was the sum total of what he desired, the only thing that he cared about. And little by little, the whole world was forced to realize that this was so, and that Hindenburg had changed from the dress of a soldier to the dress of a statesman and that he was fully able to make those qualities which had enabled him to rise to the head of his profession serve him in the carrying out of his duties as statesman and representative of a great nation.

Hindenburg's greatness was not only to be seen in his actions nor heard in what he said—it was also the essence of his own character and of his private thoughts. His personality counted for more than his deeds or his words.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

HINDENBURG felt a very deep sympathy with those of his countrymen who lived in the occupied areas, and he watched year after year, with great admiration, the conduct of these people, who—in the most trying circumstances — behaved with a praiseworthy degree of moderation and dignity. The President therefore, welcomed the opportunity in March, 1926, to visit the recently freed districts of the Rhine. In Cologne, he attended a celebration in the great *Messehalle*, where he addressed a huge concourse of people, who were very eager to hear what he had to say on this festive occasion.

“ It was a bitter feeling,” says Hindenburg, “ for every German heart to know that the ancient German country on the Rhine, that cradle of German history and German personality, lay spiritually and physically separated from us, in the hands of foreign occupiers. To all of us, the Rhine is the symbol of our great past, of our eventful history. In the land through which it flows, we see on all sides reminders of the development of our people ; here, the German Kaisers were elected and crowned ; here, the first German masters of poetry, art and architecture lived and worked ; here, the first feelings of free citizenship unfolded and reached independence and emphasis out of the mists of time. This ground, so rich in beauty and cultivation, has also seen many wars ; no river district has been fought over so often as the Rhineland, and more than once these

battles about the Rhine have influenced the development of our nation. Throughout our history, the Rhine has been the river of our fate ; it has often been a bright symbol of German strength and greatness, but it has also often been a dark picture of German suffering, especially when our old arch failing—disunion—has paralysed our strength. For this reason every German, from no matter what race he may spring, feels himself closely attached to the Rhine, and that which you have suffered here in the last few years we have all felt as a national calamity and we have all suffered with you and sympathized with you from the bottom of our souls. We, the elected representatives of the country, of the State of Prussia and of other German countries, the citizens of the town of Cologne and her guests from the country, have come here to celebrate together the fact that a part of the Rhineland has at last won back its freedom. Yet other German suffering of the immediate past makes its voice heard. Painfully distressed, we must think of our brothers, in our otherwise proudly united country, who must still bear the burden of foreign occupation ; with true and grateful hearts we send them our greetings in the hope that we shall soon be re-united in freedom. In this hour, we all think with warm hearts and inextinguishable gratitude of those who, in the heavy troubles of the past years, gave up their lives, their freedom, their homes, or at least hazarded them, that they might not be untrue to the country and to its honour. It shall also never be forgotten that the Rhineland, in the hours of its own most bitter despair, continually asked the Government not to make any

political decisions with special view to the needs of the occupied territory, but always to take into consideration the combined interests of the whole country and to make decisions in accordance with the requirements of the whole German future. All these sacrifices have not been made in vain ; they have served to show the world in general that the people on the Rhine firmly and unyieldingly adhere to their nationality ; they have steeled and hardened the patriotism of the whole Rhineland in the fire of trouble, and they have demanded and strengthened, by their exemplary determination in war and danger, that unity of which we all stand in such need to-day. Through the difficult experiences of the past years, the weaponless fight, which our men and women in the Ruhr and the Rhine have had to wage for their nationality, for their rights and for their freedom, has produced the deepest conviction that Germany's destruction has not been completed and that the whole way to ruin has not been trodden. We, like you who have fought this battle so bravely, shall all develop this belief in the future of Germany which shall peacefully and strongly reunite the land on the Rhine with the rest of Germany. And, further, let us hope that the German people will also pass through the internal strifes and the troubles of the present to a complete unity and a strong sense of nationality. This must be achieved by means of a new spirit of brotherly understanding. That we may all be able to contribute something towards this must be our inward wish as we cry : May Germany, our dear country, live ! Hurrah ! Hurrah ! Hurrah !

The last words of the President were drowned in the deafening cheers of the crowd. Hindenburg stood upon the platform and looked down upon them with a little, half pathetic smile. He, too, rejoiced to see a part of his beloved Rhineland freed from the occupation—but he was now too old to feel that wild enthusiasm which he saw demonstrated before him. His eyes lingered upon the ranks of the students, and he searched those young faces for signs of the spirit which had animated their fathers and grandfathers. In these boys he placed his hope for the future of the country; these who, in the full possession of their young powers could still give so large a measure of their respect and their affection to an old man like himself. For, as the great man stood there in the *Messehalle*, he must have known that the cheers which the students gave were as much in his honour as in honour of the occasion which they were there to celebrate.

In the evening, Hindenburg stood on the balcony of the *Rathaus* to watch a torchlight procession of the different guilds and societies of Cologne and of the student corporations. For more than an hour the torch-bearers passed in a long procession before the President, while he saluted the flags as they were borne down the streets. He again spoke to the crowds and appealed for unity and understanding, and was answered by the wild cheers of the people. Finally, the crowd took up the noble song, "*Deutschland über alles*," and a great wave of harmony arose under the stars. Men and women joined together to sing that stately tune, and there were tears of profound emotion in many eyes as the last notes died away in the chill darkness of early spring.

As the different zones of the Rhine were vacated, Hindenburg sent many messages to the inhabitants of the freed areas. All these speak constantly of reunion and of future hopes. None strikes any note of vindictiveness against the foreign soldiers ; none contains a single word that could be offensive to the allied countries, but each reveals the depth of sorrow which Hindenburg suffered through the knowledge that Germany was not free, and each expresses his admiration for the conduct of the population in the occupied districts.

Hindenburg's sense of fitness was most remarkable, when it is remembered that he had had no training other than a military one, and when it is taken into account that he could not feel really at home in the realms of politics. He rose almost to giant greatness when he put the past resolutely behind him and gave his whole strength and the remaining years of his life to the services of a republican State. He had not been "nurtured in democracy," and, in order to help his country he had to discount his heredity, his traditions and training and to rise above all his own personal feelings. This he succeeded in doing, and he never referred, on any public occasion, to the gods he had been brought up to worship.

To young, new, democratic Germany, he spoke often of the great name they had inherited. They must strive, he said, to be worthy of the great traditions of the past, and he was sure that they would pass through present darkness into a future that would be light.

In the history of his country, Hindenburg will stand always as the last bearer of the old traditions and the first introducer of a note of hope into the surrounding chaos

of the transition stage. How much the words he had to say counted among the students, is evidenced by the fact that those who were studying in the western Universities sent him a message of goodwill in which they declared that they wished to "show themselves as Germanic heirs who were worthy of their fathers." That they should be worthy of their fathers was all that Hindenburg had to ask of them, for he could imagine no better thing than this.

And, if the young were going to prove themselves true heirs of the men who had died to keep the foot of the stranger out of Germany ; and if the peoples in the freed districts were going to emerge from the trials of the occupation with their feelings of patriotism heightened—then, indeed, he felt he was justified in looking with optimism towards the future, however dismal, however trying the present might be. If he did not live to see the day when Germany was absolutely free, he still would have done more than his share to fit the country for that freedom when it came.

RESUSCITATION OF AN EMPIRE

MANY years before fate had called Hindenburg to the Presidency, he had worked for a period in the War Ministry. He had brought to his work there those immense powers of concentration and that untiring devotion to the task in hand, however distasteful that task might be, which had characterized him through every phase of his career. He wrote in his memoirs that this was a time upon which he could not look back with any degree of pleasure, though he recognized its importance to his military career. One thing, however, which he noticed during that time was the unflagging zeal of the minor clerks and their immediate superiors. He saw how these went quietly about their appointed business, year in and year out, and how uncomplainingly and conscientiously they fulfilled their duties, which to his soldier's mind seemed to be so uninspiring and uninteresting. He never forgot these pale-faced men in their plain, dark clothes, and how they succeeded in keeping the wheels of the office well oiled and smoothly running, and upon his appointment to the Presidency, he had an opportunity of expressing his appreciation of the work done by the Civil Service generally and of acknowledging their importance to the State.

Shortly after he had taken office, he received certain high officials of the civil service and, on this occasion, he spoke in generous praise of their work and its importance.

“I am fully aware,” he said, “that the Civil Servants of

Germany, by their unselfish and devoted work, have contributed in no small measure to the fact that, in the difficult years after the Revolution, the order of the State and the unity of the *Reich* remained in a safe situation. I also know how much you, gentlemen, have served the country and the German people by your untiring work, and I am convinced that in the future you will also lead the way for all the officials of the civil service, with the example of your most dutiful work. To-day, it gives me a very keen pleasure to express my thanks and my admiration to you, as representatives of the Civil Service, as well as personally."

These were people of whom Hindenburg could very well express a sincere admiration. They were exponents of that "long, quiet, peaceful work" of which he thought so highly. Duty was their guiding star, as it had always been his own, and it was theirs to plod year after year through all the weary routine work which is necessary to the proper running of a State. They sat in their offices with their sheaves of documents and papers and preserved order and supplied information when it was required: no one ever gave their work a thought, and they received but a small measure of credit and recognition for the services they rendered.

When Hindenburg visited Düsseldorf in September, 1925, just after the first zone had been evacuated by the Allies, he took the opportunity once more to say words of recognition and encouragement to the Civil Servants who had carried out their work in the occupied areas of the country.

“ I feel it my duty, in the name of the State, to express to you and all other officials of the country, the sincerest admiration for the gallant bearing which the Civil Servants of all grades have shown in the difficult years behind us, and to thank them for the faithful fulfilment of their duties and for the great sacrifices and heavy sufferings which they have borne for the sake of the country. In the difficulties of these times, the Civil Servants have shown themselves to be fully able for their tasks, and have been a support to the people by putting their own welfare last, and, above all, they have set the country an example of courageous steadiness and unconditional devotion. In the honourable history of the German Civil Service, the unerring devotion to duty and the brave bearing of the officials in the Rhineland and Westphalia will form an especially famous page.”

So it was that Hindenburg, with an eye which missed no detail, brought the work of the humbler officials to the light of day and found it good. It was through people like these that he sought personally to approach the different States of Germany, and to form closer ties between them and the Government at Berlin. For it was very essential that the lesser officials of the States should be in harmony with the Government, because disharmony here might cause the “ national ” feeling to disappear, which he so anxiously strove to awake throughout the country. There is an old rhyme which tells how “ for want of a nail ” a horse’s shoe was lost, and how the consequent loss of the shoe finally led to the loss of a battle, and how the loss of the battle led to the loss of

the cause. Hindenburg knew exactly the importance of every detail in the affairs of State, and he forced others, by the example of his own painstaking way of dealing with every trifle, to recognize the same. Germany, during the time after the revolution, had a skin as sensitive as that of the fairy-tale princess who was bruised by a pea which had twenty mattresses piled on the top of it. The smallest discomfort, real or imagined, had to be avoided if it were possible, and it was urgently necessary to preserve good feeling everywhere.

The Government, as has already been shown, had to devote the best of its powers and thought to the preserving of the financial situation and to the strengthening of the prestige of the new Germany, among foreign powers. It may practically be said that upon Hindenburg fell the whole weight of the work involved in reconciling and healing the different peoples within the country. It fell to his share to awaken in the discouraged and war-broken population a feeling of national pride. He, alone, tried to encourage the small local authorities and officials to carry out their work with enthusiasm and for the sake of the German Republic. He made these men feel that their long years of patient work were not forgotten or despised, and he made them realize just how responsible were their posts and how much depended upon them. This help and encouragement, which was always so utterly sincere, did more to awaken German national pride than anything else could have done. If a man is told by a highly superior official that he is of real importance and that his work is vital to the State, he will certainly be only too glad to agree with his superior. And, once the feeling

of importance is established in the man, he will also take an added interest in his work and will be more efficient and happy. If the small local authorities are efficient and happy, there will certainly be more cordial relationship between them and the Government than would otherwise be the case. And so, Hindenburg's maxim that loyalty was due just as much from the officer towards the soldier as from the soldier towards the officer, and that both owed loyalty to the State, worked very beneficially in the ranks of the Civil Servants, for they enjoyed their moment of public approbation after the years during which they had worked and had no other reward than a grey indifference towards their achievements. One of Hindenburg's greatest personal accomplishments was that he could make the veriest ploughboy feel the importance of his task and of himself to his country. Truly, Hindenburg the President had travelled a long way from Hindenburg the soldier.

The men, also, who were responsible for the administration of justice in the Law Courts found in Hindenburg a supporter who sternly upheld the independence of the Courts of Justice as being above all party questions. Justice, to him, was a sacred matter, with which no other considerations could be allowed to interfere. The poor man must have equal justice with the rich; the Communist was to be as impartially treated as the Conservative. In his *Osterbotschaft*, before the election to the Presidency, Hindenburg made special reference to this, when he wrote that it was the duty of the President to uphold the "sacredness" of justice.

On March the 2nd, 1926, he visited the Law Court at

Leipzig, which is the highest Court of Justice in Germany. He wished to express his respect for this august Court, the President of which received and welcomed him with a speech. Hindenburg made the following reply :

“It gives me the greatest possible pleasure to visit the highest German Law Court. You are quite correct in interpreting this visit as a proof of the importance with which I regard the administration of justice. Justice is the basis and the soul of the State ; and the higher the flames of political and social battles leap, the steadier must remain the fundamental necessity of impartial justice, which, untouched by the passion of these battles, protects and upholds Right and Law without favour or fear. For this reason, in our time which is so filled with political differences, it is more than ever essential to preserve high justice and absolutely to prevent all attempts upon its independence. Upon you, gentlemen, rests not only the task of securing the single-minded reading of the German laws, and of seeing that these are properly developed according to the needs of the present day, but you have also to be leaders and examples to all the German Courts of Justice in their strife to reach the highest perfection. The history of this High Court* is sufficient proof that it is able to do this, and for the last half-century it has been closely connected with the rise and development of the country, Other great tasks are also laid upon you ; commercial and social problems continue to confront the Justice Courts, and the law is stretching new bridges beyond

**The Reichsgericht.*

the boundaries of the country to unite the people. To-day, the wish that I have to express to you, and through you to the collective Justice Courts of the whole of Germany, is the hope that the work of your high and responsible office may also continue to secure the well-being of our people: and I greet you most cordially in the name of all those whom you serve."

Justice was, to Hindenburg, a matter of the utmost importance, and his respect for it was shown throughout the whole of his military career—and most strikingly at the period when he had to command Polish troops. Other officers of the Prussian school had no good to say of these people, who were often thievish and often dirty and who had no sense of Prussian discipline and usually but little knowledge of the German tongue. They often suffered injustice and were the victims of unfair treatment by both non-commissioned and commissioned officers. Hindenburg, in his memoirs, certainly refers to the regrettable frequency of petty thefts and other small crimes among the Polish troops, but he also finds excuses for them and further states that he found them both willing and industrious. It may safely be said that very few other Prussian officers would have been found to endorse his views on the subject of the Poles, and that he was able to evolve such opinions was due simply to his rigid sense of justice. He did not see results only—he looked also for causes, and, strict though he might be, he made allowances for circumstances.

When Hindenburg visited Leipzig, he also attended the great exhibition of German Work and Trade, and in the

Rathaus he addressed a large gathering on the subject of what he had seen.

“I can assure you that it has made a good impression upon me, here, at the foot of the War Memorial (that symbol of the great German past), to see in the great hall a kind of review of German work and German enterprise, in which not only a sign of an industrious and rising present may be seen, but also a hope for a new German commercial success in the future. The *Messe* of Leipzig, with its enormous organization and scope, has always given our people a comprehensive survey of the high quality of our work and of the technical abilities of our population. The Spring Exhibition of this year has struck a new note in that it gives special proof of the technical advances of German production, new methods of manufacture and new tools and materials, and these should give our impoverished commerce a greater scope in the use of its powers and should provide for successful results. We accompany the activities of these commercial pioneers on their way with great expectations and good wishes. Just as in previous centuries, even in the worst times of war and trouble, we never allowed the work of the *Messe* of Leipzig to be interrupted, so, to-day, shortly after the great World War, this *Messe* is once more a symbol of continuous extension and technical development of our trade and commerce, and is an important means of furthering all the interests of commercial dealing. This year, the *Messe* has especially undertaken to give German trade a spur and an encouragement.

The trade crisis lies heavily upon all sections of our people; millions of industrious people have been condemned to inaction and misery; and the German employers are fighting with the most adverse conditions. The *Messe* of Leipzig should and does prove its value in just these situations: it gives a chance to strengthen mutual trust among the people of trade circles and gives new life to the attempts to awaken new business connections at home and abroad; and it shows the world that the strength and will of German commerce have remained unbroken."

So Hindenburg went from the south of Germany to the north, from the east to the west, and everywhere he spoke words of hope and encouragement; and, although he always dwelt upon the future success which he so confidently knew must follow present efforts, he did not lightly ignore the manifold difficulties with which practically every group of people was faced.

It was this recognition of their trials and this understanding for the great efforts they were making that caused Hindenburg more and more to earn the gratitude and affection of the whole population of Germany. They did not feel that he was a kind of god, sitting aloof and cold in his high position, for they were made to realize that he really felt with them in their troubles and that he, like themselves, was working with the utmost of his powers to retrieve the lost fortunes and to rebuild a Germany which should be distinguished by a saner, cleaner glory than that of the "Militarismus" period. There was also to be counted greatly in his favour the

fact that he had not accepted the office of President with the idea of satisfying personal ambitions or with the hope of personal gain. He was too old and already too rich in honour and fame to care for these things, and he came to the palace in the Wilhelmstrasse solely with the intention of serving his country and his countrymen. And he, who had sacrificed his few remaining years of leisure to the public good, had the highest right to ask other people to follow his example, and no one could be found in Germany, whether they may be for or against him, who would be inclined to deny him this right.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE IN POST-WAR GERMANY

WHEN the war had been lost and when Germany saw her trade in ruins and her finance in chaos, and when so many material advantages had disappeared, it was scarcely surprising that the professors of the German Universities and the learned men throughout the country appealed for help that the great traditions of German culture might not also be broken. Fresh blood was needed in the Universities, and the sources from whence this might have been drawn were almost exhausted. Thousands of young men who had possessed the intellect and the power to perpetuate German learning lay dead in France and in other countries. Thousands more were forced by hard circumstances to make money to support themselves and their families and were therefore unable to spare the time necessary for study. The violent upheavals caused by the war and by the Revolution produced a certain reaction in the Schools and Universities, and it seemed likely that their finances would suffer badly and thus still further deplete the slender store of power and energy which remained to them. The new Government, however, recognized the need to support the seats of learning throughout the country; realizing, perhaps, that learning is the one thing of which a man can never be robbed. Money can be taken from him, his credit can be taken from him, and even his fair name and his position are things which may be assailed. Learning, however, once acquired, remains the indestruc-

tible possession of its owner, and no violent hands can be laid upon it. The new rulers of the country, therefore, voted what means they could afford to preserve life in the Schools and Universities and to encourage the work of those who made research in the fields of science and art. Local authorities combined with the Government in doing what they could to preserve the stability of the educational centres and, by this means, a good measure of encouragement and security was restored to them. It is safe to say that had the Government neglected this matter, Germany to-day would not be in the position in which she now stands.

In the year 1920, all the Universities and the Colleges and Higher Education Schools of Germany bound themselves into an independent self-administrative corporation in the hope of preventing the threatened disintegration of German learning and culture. This society* which received the aid of the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft† (in which Hindenburg had taken a great interest since the year 1900) was greatly dependent upon the support, both financial and moral, that it would receive from Berlin. The Government showed from the very first the keenest desire to do all it could to further the vital work which the *Notgemeinschaft* had undertaken. Among many important matters dealt with by the authorities of the Society was the position of the libraries, which, owing to the years of war, lacked many foreign books. These were promised grants to enable them to complete their collections as early as possible. Many periodicals, also, which were

**Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft.*

†The Society of Doctors and Natural Science Research Workers.

faced with the probability that they would have to close down, were preserved by the Society which made it possible for them to continue to be printed. . . . Medical science was helped by grants to obtain the necessary instruments and animals for experimental purposes to enable research workers to keep pace with other countries, and even, as the course of medical history has shown, to outstrip them. The Society went further than this, for it even made possible travelling Fellowships and, when it was deemed advisable, assisted explorers and excavators. One of the expeditions which the *Notgemeinschaft* materially helped was the South Atlantic Expedition of 1925, which undertook important deep-sea and air researches for a period of two years.

Ebert, the first German President, did much to further the work of the *Notgemeinschaft*, and Hindenburg, whose association with young people and students had always been such a happy one, gladly followed along the paths trodden by Ebert.

On June 25th, 1925, he received a deputation of students who came to offer him the best wishes of all German students on his election to the Presidency. He addressed to these young men words of approbation and encouragement for the future of the country.

“The student youth of Germany has always possessed my warmest interest, especially because they have suffered so greatly under the difficulties of the last few years. That the fine spirit of Germany is alive in you has been proved by the way in which German students to a great extent relying upon their own powers, have

emerged from the trying years that have elapsed since the war. I know that the times of trouble do not quite yet lie behind us. But what has already been achieved points to it that we shall be able absolutely to overcome them. What I can do to help in this work shall always be gladly done. I wish also to express what pleasure it gives me to know that you have come here to-day as representatives of all German students and that you are thereby showing that there exists among you a desire to be united and to work together for the good of the country. Protect and strengthen this unity, which is the one foundation-stone upon which the future of our people can rest. Always place your country above considerations of party or of opinion, and then you may rest assured that you, the academic youth, will one day see the better future of our people."

A little less than a year later, Hindenburg spoke to the students of the University of Bonn on the occasion of his visit to the recently evacuated Rhine district.

"My age and my office," he said then, in rather wistful tones, "have called me to live and to work among the old; but, with you, German youth, I shall hope and believe that you represent the future and the strength of the German nation."

Hindenburg's passionate belief in and love for the children and the youth of his country secured for him everywhere the most enthusiastic reciprocation of his feelings towards them. Professor Lessing, who had not

believed "such a degree of childishness to be possible," bears eloquent testimony to the effect produced upon the boys under his charge by the words which Hindenburg spoke to them in Hanover. Lessing states that Hindenburg told the children that he would not live to see the rehabilitation of Germany, but that he would look down from Heaven and approve the future deeds of the boys who stood before him. Professor Lessing's words are worth recording :

" . . . He really believes this, in all seriousness : after death he will go to God ; he will sit on a cloud ; he will look down upon Germany from some privileged place in Heaven and will bless my victorious boys. The cheekiest of these, after this ' Historical Experience ' drew a picture : Hindenburg, as an angel, floating on a cloud blessing our upper class. It would have been easy to encourage such a mockery ; but (and this is remarkable) there was not one among us who did not disdain it as an offence. We felt, it is not knightly, it is mean to fight with weapons of the intellect there where no kind of possibility or power existed to return the blows with similar weapons."

Lessing, in his essay entitled *Hindenburg*, also pays a great tribute to Hindenburg's honesty. At the time when the Field-Marshal was stationed at Oldenburg, Wilhelm Jordan devoted an evening at the Literary Society to a recitation of part of the *Nibelungenlied*. Hindenburg, having been asked to attend the evening's performance, replied that he had not had time, as a soldier, to occupy

himself with literature and that he feared he would be unable to judge of the value of the evening. As Lessing rather dogmatically observes, "a considerable degree of *"Barbarei"** is indicated when a German admits that he does not know the *Nibelungenlied*, though he adds that Hindenburg's admission of his ignorance revealed "unusual transparency and honesty." Lessing writes further :

"But, if one can certainly count the books he has read, he has a relationship with the world of art which is remarkable—he collects Madonna pictures ; though it is true that it does matter who has painted them or from whence they come. He collects them, as others collect stamps, and not at all out of religious feelings ; a room in his villa is especially set apart for the reception of Madonna pictures. This fact gives the observer of mankind all the pleasure that is given by contemplation of that self-sufficing life, closely preserved within its boundaries, with its naïve acceptance of those boundaries."

This "barbarian" of learning, however, was not without appreciation of its importance, for the *Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft* found in him a champion of its cause and a sympathetic and helpful friend in the time of trouble. It could hardly be expected that a soldier, and especially so devoted and single-minded a soldier, should also possess academic distinctions and knowledge. The average German professor is only too

*Lack of education.

ready to bestow the epithet "*Barbar*" upon the unacademic. Only a short time ago, the narrow view taken by a certain type of professor was most neatly demonstrated in an examination. A student, asked to discuss leading contemporary German writers, mentioned, amongst others, an author whose name is justly famous not only in his own country but in most others, and who is as much renowned for his prodigious knowledge as for his writing. The mention of this name acted like an evil draught of great magic upon the examining professor. In fierce tones he addressed the unfortunate candidate with the words: "Herr S——, how can you mention that man? Are you not aware that he was unable to pass his matriculation examination?" It is quite certain that the learning of the writer under discussion far exceeded that of the examining professor, and this story must serve to show how it is that a man whose education has been acquired in places other than in the Universities comes to be described so pithily as a "barbarian."

Hindenburg, however, was not indifferent to the importance of education and of learning in general. His speech at Weimar, when he spoke of the trust and comfort which so many people had been able to find in the heritage of culture which had come down to them through so many generations, and which remained undimmed and undisputed at the present day, amply proves this. Not only did the heritage of the past retain its lustre in the eyes of the world, but German intellectual life had survived the storms of war and the darkness of Revolution, and it was certain that the present leaders of German learning

would be able to relinquish their hold on the reins to a generation which would be worthy to take them over just as they, in their turn, had been fit to accept them from their fathers. The continuity of the intellectual life of the country was thus secured, for, if even the Revolution had been able to break it, it seemed unlikely that it would ever pass into nothingness. It cannot be said that Hindenburg personally contributed very greatly to this state of affairs, but he certainly did succeed in impressing upon the academic world, as he tried to do in every other sphere, the necessity of preserving unity and the need that the academic world should not hold itself too coldly aloof, but should try to make its learning a warm and living benefit to the community without its gates.

In Germany, perhaps more than anywhere else, the post-war *Akademiker** is inclined to take the attitude that the unstudied are "barbarians" and to look upon them as inferior. This is partly to be accounted for by the fact that professors and members of the learned professions have begun to count for more than they had counted in the days when the Army had been everything and all other people nothing. Then, in the hour when they came into their own, the University men were a little inclined to look down upon the rest of the world, and Hindenburg's appeal that they should not set themselves apart and should always keep in their minds the maxim that the country was to come first and everything else last, did not fail entirely in its effect. There was something very touching in the fact that this man, who had lived all his life by the power of the sword, should turn at last to the

*Studied man.

seats of learning and ask them to educate their young men to help the country in its efforts to recover from the havoc wrought by the sword. That he, who at one time might even have felt a definite approval of a couplet composed by one of the proud dukes of Somerset,* should spend the last years of his life in trying to establish in his country the best possible form of democracy, was so strange that, in itself alone, this fact was more than sufficient to give his words weight. In his memoirs, the words "My Kaiser" constantly appear, and there can be no doubt that he saw in the person of the Emperor almost a god upon earth. In his speeches, since he became President, two other words have been substituted—"Our country."

In the Universities, the homes of German learning and art, Hindenburg found tradition which had not become obsolete, an hereditary glory of which the most democratic mind could find nothing bad to say. So he, whose own traditions had been so violently torn away from him, turned at last to these inviolable homes whose great names were renowned in history and which could still wear their crowns and decorations unashamed in the presence of democracy. Of all institutions, Hindenburg hoped most from the Universities to receive help and support in achieving his aim. The great "barbarian," therefore, approached the seats of the learned and made his appeal—and shame it had been indeed had he been cold-shouldered at the gates.

In the year 1807, when Berlin was occupied by the

*Let laws and learning, arts and commerce die—
But leave us still our old nobility.

French, when Prussia was impoverished and politically disturbed, Fichte made his moving addresses to the people and tried to awaken them to a sense of nationality and to remove their depression. It is strange to note how similar are the appeals he made to those which Hindenburg, in nearly the same situation, made so many years later.

“Do not let us say,” said Fichte, “that we must still rest a little longer, still sleep and dream a little longer, until an improvement will perhaps set in of itself. It will never come of itself. He, who has once missed yesterday . . . and who even will not arouse himself to-day, will still less be able to act to-morrow. Every withdrawal only makes us lazier and rocks us more comfortably into a peaceful state of accustoming ourselves to our miserable conditions. . . . That which is demanded of you is a decision . . . which, without swaying and without tiring, endures utterly until it has reached its goal.”

Hindenburg also appealed to the young men of the country, as well to those without, as those within the Universities, to answer to a similar call and to make a similar effort to shake off their shackles. True, his speeches never held that eloquent fire, or that passion which characterized those of Fichte, but these two utterly dissimilar men came, through the strangeness of circumstances, to do much the same work. Hindenburg, however, did not have to make his appeal to ears so sluggish as those which listened to Fichte—and of all those who came under the sway of Hindenburg’s personality none

brought him a more eager loyalty, nor gave him more willing support, than the University students. For these he was not simply an old man, but a monument of all the patriotic virtues and a leader who deserved to be obeyed. His name, even in his lifetime, acquired that magic sound which is usually associated only with the names of those long dead. Living, Hindenburg had become an historical figure, and he moved under the golden halo to which his deeds entitled him.

For his military fame, he was entitled to wear the "Blücherkreuz"—but, for the still, quiet work he did as President of the German Republic, he wore no outward symbol, and received no reward. But it is more than likely that history will dwell far more upon his achievements since the year 1925 than upon the victories of Tannenberg and the Masovian Lakes, great as these military masterpieces were.

It is not Hindenburg's smallest claim on the gratitude of his country that he succeeded in raising the flame of patriotism in the hearts of the University men. Students in their work very often forget the need for patriotism, and patriotism in these days is also a worn-out word which has latterly fallen into disrepute. "Patriotism" meant to German youth something belligerent, and to Hindenburg certainly belongs a large share of the credit for reviving that nobler idea of "*Vaterlandsliebe*" which was so necessary to the new life of the country.

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

IT was not only necessary for Hindenburg to try and unite the different States in Germany, but he had also to stimulate feelings of patriotism and nationality among the many Germans who lived and worked in foreign countries. The members of the Consular Service, the many salesmen, students and others who seldom returned to Germany and who were in danger of forgetting that they were German, were helped and encouraged by Hindenburg. Many of these people resented the Revolution and, from their foreign habitations, looked coldly upon the proceedings of the new Government.

In their eyes, however, the situation improved when Hindenburg became President, because he was a representative of the old, discarded traditions. They argued that if he could see value in the new state of affairs, and if he were content to devote himself to the service of the country under the new régime, then there must be something at least to be said in its favour. Party quarrels grievously affected the Germans abroad, and Hindenburg constantly besought them to remember that upon them rested the responsibility of representing their country in foreign lands, and that it was as necessary for them to live and work in harmony as it was for the home-keeping Germans to do so. In many ways Hindenburg showed the interest he took in the troubles of those whose work caused them to live abroad, but this interest was especially revealed by the facts that he became Honorary President of the Society of Germans Abroad, and that he always

welcomed to his house any man whose business kept him in foreign places. By means of talking to salesmen, artists and others, he drew in a vast store of information and acquainted himself with the many difficulties with which a man may be faced while living permanently in a country other than his own.

There was one dissension which caused widespread bitter feeling among Germans both at home and abroad, but more especially among the latter. This was the *Flaggenstreit**. Many people could not accustom themselves to the new black, red and gold colours and wished to adhere to the old black, white and red flag. This was a case where the exercise of the greatest possible tact was necessary, for neither those who wished to adopt the new flag, the colours of which were laid down in the Constitution of Weimar, nor those who wished to keep the old one at the mastheads could be offended. Hindenburg dealt personally with this question, and, on the 5th of May, 1926, an order of the President was published which decreed that the German Consular and Ambassadorial houses abroad should fly the black, red and gold colours of the Republic and also the black, white and red flag (with black, yellow and red in one corner) of the Merchant Service. That everything did not, however, run entirely smoothly at first is shown by the following letter of May 9th, 1926, which Hindenburg addressed to the Chancellor, Dr. Luther :

“ The second Decree of May 5th, 1926, with regard to the German flags, has met with considerable misunder-

*The flag dispute.

standing since it has been made public. The recent trade developments abroad which had smoothed the way towards giving Germany another and better standing in foreign countries, and which were causing us once more to take a place in world commerce, demand a strong co-operation and a proud recognition of their nationality on the part of all Germans living abroad, and, while these people are living in foreign countries, and working under especially hard circumstances, the unfortunate flag dispute hinders them. The Decree of the 5th May, 1925, was intended to do away with this disharmony, and I am quite certain that it will also achieve this purpose.

“As I have repeatedly told you, nothing lies further from my mind than to slight in any way the national colours laid down by the Constitution. But, unfortunately, public and Press discussions have recently proved once more how dangerous and fateful is a constant dispute about the flag for our people.

“It is my sincerest desire to find, as soon as possible, a practicable way in which to provide a satisfactory conciliation, which shall meet with the requirements of contemporary Germany and its aims, and which shall also be just towards the development and history of our State. I therefore request you to set yourself in communication not only with those who are responsible for the making of laws in the country, but also with all societies who are especially interested in this question, so that our aim may be reached with all possible speed. I trust that the time is not far distant when the German people will again be able to live

peacefully under one single outward symbol of its nationality."

Thus Hindenburg did not hesitate to take part in the attempts to settle those difficult and delicate problems with which the new State was confronted. It would have been easy for him to skate over these matters with a few vague words, but, whenever he saw that there was anything to be done, he immediately set about doing it. The flag dispute serves simply as an example to show with what tact he approached the burning questions of the day and with what success his efforts were usually attended.

In writing about the President, foreign papers are apt to stress his military characteristics too much. He has been compared with all kinds of people and with many inanimate objects, and a common verdict has been reached that, were a granite block to be endowed with life, it would be like Hindenburg. No student of human features could be found to endorse a judgment like this. A stiff, upright carriage, a military step, rugged features and a sharp glance; these are the obvious things one notices, but further, the whole face wears an expression of austere kindness, which reassures and pleases. True, Hindenburg's typically Prussian personality could never have gained the unreserved love and admiration of a whole country had it not been for the deeds which had made him famous. It is certain that the Germans as a whole can scarcely see the man for the glamour of his achievements, just as the wooden statue of him which was erected in the Königsplatz in Berlin could finally

scarcely be seen for the nails.* It is, however, a most remarkable thing that even those people who have little sympathy with him, personally, find nothing to say against him. "*Ein anständiger Kerl*,"† is what they are forced to admit, and the tribute of that comment is paid to the President throughout the country.

The Germans who live abroad, however, are most especially grateful to Hindenburg for the personal interest he has taken in them and in their concerns. The flag dispute had touched them more nearly than anything else could have done, and they gladly accepted the solution of the difficulty suggested by Hindenburg, because they looked upon him as a supporter of the good, old traditions. To say that he supported the old traditions is perhaps to give a slightly false impression, for it might argue that he inclined to monarchism and the return of the old Army, and this is entirely incorrect. From the day when he stood in the presence of the assembled *Reichstag* and swore the oath of the Weimar Constitution, he never showed the smallest inclination to depart from the precepts of the Republic. He was absolutely loyal to the new Constitution, and did all he could to strengthen and help it. The members of the Republican Government, too, could never forget how he, the Prussian officer, had thrown the whole weight of his influence into the balance when he brought the soldiers home from France. In these days of gloom

*In order to raise funds for the war, a giant wooden statue of Hindenburg was erected and the public were asked to buy nails which they then hammered into the statue. The monument was called "The Iron Hindenburg."

†"A decent fellow."

and trouble, it was Hindenburg who saved his country from complete chaos and from Communism.

In January, 1927, the Foreign Germans' Institute, at Stuttgart, celebrated the tenth anniversary of its existence. In honour of this occasion they created the "*Deutscher Ring*"* which was to be given to men who had especially deserved the gratitude of all Germans by the work they had done and which was supposed to be a symbol of the fact that a golden ring of faith encircled all the German people. The first "German Ring" was awarded to Hindenburg and was presented to him as a token of the affection and esteem in which he was held by "foreign" Germans.

Hindenburg also took part in the discussions regarding another bitterly contested question of the day—that of the *Fürstenenteignung*†—and his standpoint is revealed in the following letter of May 22nd, 1926, addressed to the *Staatsminister*, Herr von Lobell :

"I have read your letter of May the 19th with the liveliest interest. But, on legal grounds arising from the constitutional position of President of the German *Reich*, I find myself quite unable to take up a position in a public proclamation with regard to the petition to expropriate the property of the princes. I should also not like to make a decree to the Government ; for, the Government in its announcement of the 26th of April of this year, has already declared, clearly and positively, to the German people that the uncompensated expro-

* German Ring.

†Confiscation of the property of princes.

priation of properties contradicts the principles which form the basis, for every act in a legally administered State. From this standpoint, the Government has definitely expressed its objection to the petition for the uncompensated expropriation of the princes' properties, not only in its official announcement but also in the speech of the Minister for Home Affairs in the *Reichstag*, on April the 28th. The new Government formed by the Chancellor, Dr. Marx, on May the 17th, 1926, has expressly accepted this point of view as their own, in their declaration of May the 19th. I can therefore assume that the Government shares your opinion with regard to the legal consequences and danger of this petition without any special step upon my part being necessary. With regard to the decisions which I myself shall have to make when the matter has further advanced, I must again—as laid down in the Constitution—reserve my decision until the result of the vote*, and until the law based upon that vote is brought to me to be executed.

“However, I will not omit to inform you of my personal opinion, and I will state that I fully share the fears which you have expressed; and I have also from the beginning of the development of this state of affairs, stated to the Government the very same considerations as those you approach. That I, who have passed my life in the service of the Kings of Prussia and the German Kaisers, feel this petition firstly to be a great wrong and then as revealing a regrettable lack of feeling for tradition and as base

*Volksentscheid.

ingratitude, I need hardly tell you. However, I will endeavour to treat the expropriation movement not as a purely political, but as a moral and lawful affair. From this viewpoint, I see in it a considered attempt against the joints of the lawfully administered State, whose deepest foundation is respect for the law and for property which is acknowledged by the law. It strikes a blow against morality and justice. Should this petition find acceptance, one of the pillars upon which the lawfully administered State rests, would be cut down and a way cleared which would lead to the expropriation or denial of private property; and which would also lead irresistibly downhill, if a chance, and perhaps passionately excited, plebiscite should be permitted.

“Through the precedent of the present case, methods might be adopted to lead the people, by means of irritating the instincts of the masses and the exploitation of the needs of the people, still further along the way to the expropriation of private properties, through such plebiscites, and thus to withdraw the basis of Germany’s cultural, commercial and social life. I see a great danger in this, especially in our position, where the collective social and ideal powers of the nation are absolutely needed to preserve our position, and I think that our constitutional principles are threatened at a time when we are making our first steps along the road to new commercial importance, and that our position in the world will consequently suffer damage.

“I am convinced, in spite of the strong (and in many respects unlovely) agitation for this petition, that the

quiet judgment and sound sense of our people will not ignore this moral and legal side of the question, nor fail to recognize the infinite danger which here threatens all classes of people. I therefore confidently hope that our fellow-citizens will bear this in mind in making their decision on June the 20th, and will avoid the damage which would otherwise be done to the basic principles of every State and which would detract from correct reading of the law and justice."

From this letter it will be seen that the man who had "passed his life in the service of the Kings of Prussia" found it impossible to regard with equanimity the expropriation of the princes' property. As is well known, the princes were finally compensated in money for the expropriation of their possessions, but, of necessity, this compensation fell far short of the value of the lands. Thus, under the shadow of the Republican flag, the proud princes of Germany had to suffer the loss of estates which had been in the possession of their forefathers for many generations. The old order had changed, and changed irrevocably. The broad acres passed finally into the hands of the State, to be administered by the people. And the irony of fate had decreed that the man whose signature completed this act of expropriation should be a member of the old order.

There must have been bitter feelings in his heart when he was faced with this duty, but there was no other thing for him to do, who had abandoned all monarchical principles and accepted the new order, in the hope that this would tend to the final good of the country. In spite of all that

is written about the love of their nations which is supposed to flourish in the hearts of all prominent statesmen and soldiers, it is very seldom that this patriotic feeling is put to so severe a test as that which Hindenburg was forced to undergo. And he proved in his whole conduct that for him the country came essentially first, and that, beside its claims, those of monarchists or republicans were only minor matters. For this reason, therefore, he was, as President of the Republic, to set aside all personal prejudices and, in fact, all other considerations, and to concentrate solely on the rebuilding of the broken house. Politics! The word still sounded unpleasantly in his ears; but, in order to achieve his aim, he was obliged to take part in the very affairs which were most distasteful to him.

A very much criticized essay,* which nearly had the effect of ruining its writer's career, and which appeared shortly before the Presidential elections, reads as follows:

“ . . . This is a perfectly complete man. I will not speak of the inhumanity and the warm-hearted egoism of this naïve self-righteousness. From the very moment when this least political of men is mis-cast for a political rôle, another will be the decisive factor: this man, through and through, is a man of service. Here are not even the beginnings of a personality capable of deciding, measuring and considering. Here the sole essential will always be the instruction, the tradition, the concensus that ‘One certainly must’ or ‘one certainly must not.’ . . . He will remain

* Professor Theodor Lessing's *Hindenburg*.

the 'good shepherd and protector' only so long as some clever man is there who will interest him in his duties and arrange them for him; but, given freedom, he will become simply an uncontrolled wolf. A nature like Hindenburg's will ask to the death—'Where can I serve?' It is certainly sad and touching that, during the World War, one of the worst and most evil natures of the history of the world made precisely this simple and most trusting man the tool of his ambitions and his desires, and covered his real aims with the flag of national ideals. But just there the danger is revealed! According to Plato, philosophers should rule the people. But a philosopher would hardly mount the throne with Hindenburg. Only a representative symbol, a question mark, a zero, would do that. It may be said 'Better a zero than a Nero.' Unfortunately, the course of history has shown that behind a zero lurks always a future Nero."

It is not to be denied that there is a certain amount of truth contained in the above-quoted sentences. If one hesitates to admit the description of the misguided ex-Kaiser as "one of the most evil men the world has ever seen," one cannot dispute that Hindenburg is emphatically a man who has devoted his whole life to "service"; and that a servant is generally guided by a master is also a matter about which there is small doubt. Just as Hindenburg was proud to be in the service of the German Kaisers, so, when he became President, he was proud to serve the country. And Professor Lessing goes too far and does not anything like hit the mark

when he states that a Hindenburg, if left to himself, turns simply into "an uncontrolled wolf." Possibly Professor Lessing considered that a Prussian soldier, educated and brought up solely with military ideas, could not possibly find either interest or hope in the pursuit of any other business than that of war. This, however, was an erroneous conclusion, as the whole subsequent life of the President has demonstrated. He has not been a party tool. He has kept himself entirely outside party disputes, and he has also, as in the case of the expropriation of the princes' property, not hesitated to express his opinions. He has also loyally kept himself true to the tenets of the Republican Constitution, and no word could be raised against his conduct in the office of President.

Many people will be found to dispute that he is a "strong" man, in the way, for example, that Bismarck was strong. It is certainly true that he does not possess either the force of character or the ruthless will of the Iron Chancellor; in Hindenburg there is more devotion and less ambition. Bismarck had the commanding, trumpet tones of an Isaiah—Hindenburg has the more appealing voice of a John the Baptist, calling for regeneration. Bismarck's achievements were Herculean, amazing—but they did not endure. Hindenburg, who expressly writes that a Bismarckian State seems to him to be the ideal one, nevertheless unhesitatingly placed the whole influence of his personality on the side of another type of State altogether. Bismarck worked largely for himself—Hindenburg entirely for the country. Future generations of Germans will certainly remember and honour the name of the less impressive and less powerful

Hindenburg above the once all-important name of Bismarck. For, in the pages of history, Bismarck's work will resemble simply a flash in the pan, the result of which scarcely outlasted his lifetime. It will be contended, "But he was the first to unite the German States and form them into an Empire." The reply is that he united the German States by the unscrupulous wielding of his powers, and he did not unite them upon a basis of mutual understanding, but by means of subordinating them to Prussia. Had he really succeeded, Revolution would have knocked in vain at the gates of Empire—a united people would have clung to the monarchy it had been educated to honour.

Hindenburg is the right man in the right place. He has to some extent succeeded in uniting the country by means of inspiring his own ideals in the hearts of so many of his countrymen. He has the gift of making high and low feel "I too am a German, I will do what I can for Germany." At the death of Ebert, the country needed a popular figure-head, needed some one at the helm who meant something personally to every man, woman and child in the country. And the strangeness of fate caused a soldier to become the head of a pacifist land, a Monarchist to be the President of a Republic and a man who had already passed into old age to typify the hopes and ambitions of a very young State. It is also not a little remarkable that not one man in the ranks of the new Government could be found who was really suitable to be its head.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE
AN EMPIRE'S GRATITUDE

THE 2nd of October, 1927, Hindenburg's 80th birthday, gave the whole nation an opportunity to express its gratitude and admiration of its soldier President. The question of how best to express the congratulations of the people was discussed at a Cabinet Meeting, and, as a result, the following announcement was made public on June 21st, 1927 :

“ At one of its last meetings, the Cabinet has considered the question of the best way to celebrate the 80th birthday of President von Hindenburg on October 2nd, this year. It has been clearly seen that the German people are determined to take the opportunity given to them on this occasion of once more expressing their affection and respect for him. On the other hand, the Government is convinced that it is dealing according to the wishes of the President if it refrains from making expensive, general celebrations on this day and casts the birthday wishes in a form which shall give due weight to the needs of the present time and the distress which still exists amongst our people. In order to give every German, both at home and abroad, an opportunity to express the grateful honour in which he holds the person of the President, the *Reichs* Government and the local Governments of the various German States, have decided to inaugurate a ‘Hindenburg Fund’ which shall be handed to the President on his 80th birthday. We are certain that the President's wishes will be met,

if we suggest to him that the sum collected be applied for the benefit of those who stand particularly high in his affections, namely, the wounded, and the relatives of the fallen. Besides the collection of subscriptions for this purpose, which is to be carried out in connection with the great organizations of commercial life, etc., the issue of a Hindenburg postage stamp has been considered. This is to give wider circles of people a chance to take part in giving a birthday present to the President. Its proceeds are preferably to be devoted to the relief of distressed middle-class people, pensioners, etc."

This announcement met with the widest approval, and subscriptions soon began to reach the collecting centres from all parts of Germany and from abroad. It was said that this form of honouring the President did equal credit to him and to the people of Germany. It would have been simple to arrange a general holiday with all the usual fireworks and displays which are so dear to German hearts, but this idea, to refrain from expensive celebrations, was one which was far more appropriate to the occasion and far more pleasing to Hindenburg himself. The sum which could thus be collected was, of course, a small one when it was weighed in the balance with the terrible distress still existing in Germany. Indeed, as is witnessed by the constantly recurring riots of Communists, in whose ranks may be found many unemployed and miserable people, there is still much suffering in Germany. It cannot, however, be expected that the awful results of a world war could be cleared up

in a few years. That Germany is, on the whole, a peacefully administered and properly organized country is very much to the credit of a great people, which has really only just awakened to the fact that it is a people at all. For too many years there was no national feeling in the country, but only a kind of awed *Begeisterung** for the powers that reigned, coupled with a terrible, patient acquiescence in the organization to which all classes of people were subjected. At the head of the administration of all affairs were the militarists, and their powers were very nearly absolute, subject, of course, to the will of the Kaiser.

“This Germany,” writes Stresemann,† “broke together as a result of the world war. It broke in its constitution, in its social uses and in its commercial shape. Its thoughts and feelings have been re-formed. No one can say that this reformation has yet reached its end. It is a process which will continue through many generations. But, just as haste and unrest are symbols in our modern life, so development moves at a greater speed than it has ever done before. *In the centre of such development stands the question: How far is it necessary and possible to be national in this developing process, and how far the process is led, determined and hampered by international facts, powers and ideas.*”

In this last sentence, Stresemann approaches the most burning question which has confronted modern German statesmen, and which has been so variously answered.

*Enthusiasm.

†“*Der Deutsche Weg.*” (*The German Way*).



E.N.A.

PRESIDENT VON HINDENBURG WITH TWO OF HIS GRANDDAUGHTERS.

Hindenburg's feelings on this subject have already been clearly defined.

"We must stand well with foreign countries, but we must achieve friendly relations with them by means of showing that we are a great nation, that we are worthy of all honour, and that we are capable of rising from the wreck of the war; and not by means of a pallid policy of conciliating them at any price."

This standpoint, from which he has never deviated, was the only proper one for a statesman, who could really see into the future, to take. No country could hope to climb to eminence in the world by adopting a method of ingratiating. Ingratiation serves, at the best, as a poor, temporary makeshift for one who has no courage to take a bolder course, but, as any sort of ground principle, it is as futile as it is feeble.

Before the presidential elections the question was often asked: "What can such an old man expect to achieve?" On the occasion of his eightieth birthday, the triumphant admirers of this "old man" were able to point to the enormous work he had done, both to improve matters at home and to re-establish the credit of Germany in the eyes of the world. The voices of those who had doubted him were silenced or were raised to join in the chorus of acclamation which was heard on all sides. It can surely have seldom occurred in the history of the world that a soldier has stood before a war-weary nation as the symbol of its achievements in the time of peace.

Perhaps the feelings of the whole German nation

towards its President are most fitly expressed in the speech made in his honour, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, by Dr. Guenther-Holstein in the Town Hall of Greifswald.

“ . . . Must we not all approach him as pupils ? Around him our contemporaries restlessly plan and talk, and alas ! never come to deeds—but he acts ; and what he does is duty, what he practises is faith, and what he carries is responsibility. That which would appear to be the Spirit of the Age plays its superficial games and throw its gleaming crowns into the air, which, if one tries to catch them, break like soap-bubbles in the sun—but he is silent and listens to the deep heart-beat of all things, and sees in everything the sacred, eternal and moral powers with which alone true creative work may be done. Around us, so many unskilled people stare at the *Fata Morgana* of a future which simply gives back an image of their own dreams—but he knows that everything new, which is to last, can arise only upon the basis of nationality, that nationality which has grown out of history, comes into existence through history, and which can never be released from history.

“ . . . When the German people elected Hindenburg to be their leader, they paid their tribute to history. For the history of a people is not something outward that one can put off like a garment, and then regard as past and gone, just as one puts monuments in the Museums which then are simply looked upon like outgrown children’s shoes or toys, which are of no

use any more. But history is like the strong roots of a tree : the winds of the present day hasten through its top and the sap pulses through its leaves and fruits ; but this life-giving sap rises from the roots and, through it, the leaves become green and the fruit ripens. One of the greatest German thinkers has not vainly said : ' History is always the present.' For the present is nothing but a thoroughfare, through which the streams of history flow to us from the past in order, through us, to pass further into the future. For that which works in history is nothing other than the great spiritual powers which it carries, and, as they work creatively upon us, so they will work creatively upon the future.

" . . . When the German people elected Hindenburg it confessed the morality of its whole history, confessed in particular to the morality of its war, which it waged with the whole of the heavy, ethical seriousness that is characteristic of the Germans. What did we know of the many confusions, what of the play and interplay of diplomatic skill and unskilfulness, which always draw their thick meshes around every turning-point of the world's history ? We only knew, as Fichte knew a hundred years ago, that our battle was concerned with the preservation of the whole of our physical and spiritual being and was therefore a moral duty and, to us, a holy war. Because the German is so serious a man and so utterly led by his conscience, nothing has so deeply wounded and distressed him as the lying reproach of war guilt, but, for this reason also, nothing has acted so consolingly and purifyingly upon

him as the word spoken by Hindenburg upon the battle-field of Tannenberg. And, therefore, we will not let the eagle flight of this word be lost among the frightened cries of the many faint-hearted who sit by the wayside. . . .

“When Kaiser Wilhelm I celebrated his 90th birthday, more than a generation ago, the writer, Ernst von Wilderbruch, in whose veins flowed the blood of the same proud race, sent the exulting sentence, ‘We have him still!’ through the whole of Germany. The same sentence is on our lips to-day. We still have him, he is still with us, the mighty, old man with the iron-grey hair and the large, quiet features, who is now passing into the ninth decade of his life. How many, in these fearful years since the war, have sunk into oblivion, broken in body and soul, even after they had faithfully done their utmost until the end of the war. But he still stands as upright as ever. . . . We still have him—but what will happen when he is no longer here? The problems we have to face are still of giant size: Germany is still split in twain by two classes which represent the strongest social antitheses, the parties still dispute as bitterly and inconsiderately as ever, and, beyond the boundaries, millions of our countrymen are tragically fighting for their nationality. Truly, who is there among us who does not wish to raise his hand and swear that he will not rest until we are once more a socially united people, until that time comes when each man shall see the other only as his brother; a people, who are one in a firm national will; a people, with one idea—to stand by their brothers

on the other side of the frontier, united in deed and sacrifice. Ah! it is so easy to swear an oath on some high day or holiday—and the work of every day is so difficult, and, before the veil of the future, even the bravest man may feel his stout heart trembling.

“ . . . Thus we come to the man who to-day is the protector of our State. We do not clap our hands, we cry no hurrahs—what there is in our hearts of gratitude and rejoicing may only find its expression in the sound of music. But we will allow our song of Germany to be heard too, our avowal of Germany, an avowal which is not only upon our lips but in the depth of our hearts. Germany, my sacred country, if I forget thee—then let my own rights be forgotten! ”

Thus Dr. Guenther-Holstein stresses the urgent need for unity, and recognizes as Hindenburg's greatest glory the work he has done in this direction. The speech was delivered more than two years ago, and, fortunately for Germany, he is still alive and still in office.

Hindenburg is characterized by the “heavy German seriousness” to which Dr. Guenther-Holstein refers. He is, in fact, almost more heavy and more serious than most Germans, and we find in him little of wit or of humour. His speeches and letters are all couched in the same unornamented language which one associates with the utterances of military men. He is almost uncompromisingly plain in what he says—it would seem as if he despises the words he is obliged to use, and so unskilled is he in the art of speech that he does not fully realize the

effect that may be produced by a word in season. From a very young age he has preferred deeds, and has found more satisfaction in fulfilling a job than in discussing what might best be done. His motto of "*Ora et labora*" left him little time to acquire the "gift of the gab."

The gift presented to him by the nation on his eightieth birthday met absolutely with his approval. He could have had no present that would have given him greater pleasure. The wounded soldiers and the distressed relatives of the fallen had occasion to bless his name and his character, which made this gift the most acceptable to him.

The whole of Germany made haste to do Hindenburg honour on this birthday; each different State did what it could to contribute to the Fund, for each felt that he, in spite of his constant labour in the cause of unity, nevertheless did not wish to rob them of their own peculiar characteristics and habits.

So it was that on October 2nd, 1927, the old President received a gift which represented the united affections of the whole of Germany, and which was a tribute paid to him by those Germans who lived in foreign places as well as those who lived at home.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

GERMANY OF TO-DAY

WE have come at last to the end. In the foregoing chapters the course of Hindenburg's life has been traced from his infancy to his ripe old age; from an undistinguished boyhood to the highest military glory, and, from thence, to the Presidency.

There will be found many to dispute that he is a genuinely great man, and who will point, in support of their arguments, to his Prussian narrowness of vision and to what Lessing has called his "naïve egoism." It will be said that a man so hedged in by the boundaries of his traditions and education, and who seems to be so blindly unconscious of his limitations, really deserves (whatever he may have achieved) to be accorded the title "a man of straw." It will be stated that Hindenburg is not a man of ideas and that he can walk only in appointed paths.

And all this, to a large extent, is true. Hindenburg is not, like Bismarck, a man of ideas. Bismarck had the power not only to evolve ideas but to put them into execution. He was the first to make a united Germany possible; he alone created the Empire. Fate then overthrew his work and plunged it into hopeless ruin—and there was no new Bismarck found in Germany to restore it. It must never be forgotten that Bismarck was the first to unite these States, nor what a Herculean task the forming of that union was. But the work which he did was nevertheless not stable, and we venture to think that the work of Hindenburg will have more lasting results.

The idea upon which he is working is still, broadly speaking, the idea of Bismarck : but the method is far different. Hindenburg tries everywhere to conciliate and to improve the conditions of all classes of society. He has sacrificed his own soul for the sake of the country ; in his old age he has come forward and, by the light of a personal example, he led his people through some of the darkest and most difficult years that any country has ever been called upon to endure.

What is needed by a people in a transition stage is a moral support, and such support is perfectly supplied by natures such as Hindenburg's. From that day when he shamedly brushed the tears away from his eyes that the new cadet's jacket might not be disgraced, he has schooled himself never to give way under whatever blows fortune might deal him. Now, in his eighty-third year, he carries himself as upright as an oak tree and fulfils unswervingly all the manifold duties of his high office. There are very many people in Germany to-day who might be disposed to give way under the strain of existence, who might be glad to quit the scene of action and retire with what they can get to some quiet corner, but who are restrained from taking such a course by the remembrance of a tired, old man who still carries on and quietly does his job and who has appealed to every soul in the country to help him in the great task of rebuilding the national house.

“The German people,” he once said, “have lost faith in themselves. We cannot allow ourselves to give way to these moods of renouncement. No nation

can afford simply leave its place in the great world competition to advance and ennoble humanity."

At the time of Hindenburg's eightieth birthday, conditions in Germany were far from good. There were still strained relations between the "left" and "right" parties; attempts were still being made to force insufficient means to do the work of a proper economical balance. There was still no clarity in regard to aims, not did any clear policy exist. All that could be done was to try and carry on, to make half a loaf do in the place of a whole one, to make five small fishes feed a multitude. And, unfortunately, the men in power were no miracle workers, and were not even able to concentrate freely on the home and foreign policy, because, for the most part, they were torn, by party strife and internal disharmony amongst themselves, from the quiet contemplation and solution of the difficulties of the day.

Hindenburg, in the meantime, sat in his high place and simply did with his might that which lay nearest to him, that which demanded to be done. His keen eye missed nothing; not the smallest cross-current of the day escaped his attention, and he gave due weight to all that he saw and heard. He went on working, quietly, silently, and he has finally succeeded in building up that policy which is known as the "*Hindenburg-Linie*," that policy which says everything for the country and nothing for the party; and which demands action and remedy for bad conditions and not discussions and meetings. To-day it seems possible, through the great personal efforts made by Hindenburg, that Germany may be able to escape from

the unenviable political situation in which she is placed. Hindenburg was able to combine a strong home policy of reconciliation with a sane handling of foreign affairs. Previously, there had seemed to be no middle-course—every one was either a “conciliate the foreigner” or a violently “national” partizan. Different tendencies and political opinions were sending the country deeper and deeper into chaos and ruin. It was Hindenburg’s essential sanity which so greatly helped to restore to the country something at least of her lost balance. As has already been seen, too, Hindenburg’s influence was not confined to one class of people, but he stood equally high in the regard of every one ; and to him personally may be traced the greater certainty which may now be found in the conduct of affairs both at home and abroad. Through him, personally, many people who had been bitterly hostile to the new Government, were also won over to do what they could to heal the existing internal differences rather than to increase them. He, personally, has been a kind of symbol of hope for the future, and, through his speeches and writings, he has managed to restore some feeling of nationality, some new vigour, into the general social life throughout the country.

Germany to-day has to deal also with constantly-recurring Communist riots. These riots do not consist simply of meetings, and red flag songs, nor do they result only in a few broken windows, but they always assume a most alarming character. At best, a few shots are always fired, and, usually, a pitched battle takes place between the police and the rioters. Frequently, harmless pedestrians are wounded and killed, and the police handle the situa-

tion with such rigour that, in the affected districts, more bitterness is felt towards them than towards the Communists.

The reason why Communism has assumed such grave proportions in Germany is a cumulative one. Long before the war, Bismarck had had high words with the young Kaiser Wilhelm II because the latter had heard of the distressing conditions under which some striking miners were living, and wished to investigate the matter. Bismarck was in favour of shooting the strikers, as an example to other workers not to discard their "*Pflichtgefühl*"* in this manner. To this word, which was constantly forced upon the notice of the people, may be traced the beginning of the trouble. The workers were not supposed to want anything, were not expected to have desires or feelings. They were to work simply out of a sense of duty, and to hope for no reward. Holidays were few and far between, and, in pre-war days, the shops were open even on Sundays. The workers were expected to do their job and to ask for nothing else than to work for the sake of the work. In return, on an average, the people were certainly better housed, better clothed and better fed than the workers of all other countries. The general standard of education was also higher in Germany than elsewhere.

But the iron shadow of this "*Pflichtgefühl*" lay over everything and everybody, and it was small wonder that the workers began, little by little, to ask for their share of the good things of life and for a chance to be happy. It is

*Feeling for duty.

also not surprising that Communism began to be a serious danger after the Revolution.

War always leaves behind it a trail of abnormal conditions, and a beaten country feels these more heavily than a victorious one. Had Germany won, victory could have served only to fix the Kaiser more firmly on his throne and to give the Army a more shining name amongst the civilian people. But, when the country was starved and defeated, there was nothing and nobody that the population could trust. Small wonder, when they looked back upon the years of disciplined repression to which they had been subjected, and remembered the four ghastly years of war from which they had emerged, that they arose and threw off the repression of the old Government.

It was also not unnatural that extremes of feeling should exist—Communism and Monarchism—and it must at once be admitted that of these two extremes Communism is the stronger. There are very few people in Germany to-day who would welcome the return of the Kaiser and a militarist régime. Many of those who would have done so have been won over from their uncompromising attitude towards the new Government by the fact that Hindenburg has become President. If he, whose name was so closely bound up with the Monarchy and with the old Army, could see the advantages in this new form of Government, could see in it a hope for the future of the nation, then they too must be prepared to give it a trial.

The Communists consist chiefly of the unemployed and the unskilled labourers, whose pay is poor ; and it must

be admitted that the people have a genuine grievance. There is very much suffering amongst them, and it is no difficult matter to inflame them against the State and against the police, who do not hesitate to fire upon them. The police, in the excitement of the moment, are very indiscriminate, and a story has been told of how a Berlin Chief of Police, in plain clothes, became involved in a Communist riot, and was severely knocked on the head by a constable. Needless to observe, the constable responsible for this deed of desecration was never found, but there was considerable dismay in the police force over the affair.

Hindenburg, himself, does all he can even to conciliate the extremist factions in Germany. He does not speak about "*Pflichtgefühl*" to men who are starving. He says, "I know the difficulties under which you are struggling to exist. We are doing what we can to remedy them, and we ask you to help us as far as you can for the sake of the country. It is our desire to leave Germany in a better condition for our heirs, and we can only do this if we all work together and try to see the whole picture and not just the little corner of it which affects ourselves."

Thus it comes about that Hindenburg is not unsympathetically regarded even by the Communist extremists, because he has sufficient breadth of vision to recognize that they are making heavy weather and are suffering almost worse than anyone else for the unfavourable economical conditions.

Matters are now slowly, slowly improving. True, there is still a deceptive appearance of prosperity in such

places as Berlin. Thousands of prosperous-looking shops and cafés daily open their doors to streams of customers. Many of the former are living on credit, while the latter change hands perhaps three times a year, as owner succeeds owner along the path to the Bankruptcy Courts. Businesses cut their expenses down to the narrowest possible margin and offer their goods at the cheapest rates in order to make sales. Credit is long and money is tight, and upon everyone lies the certain knowledge that it will probably be years before there is any real improvement. The enormous burden of war debts rests crushingly upon the shoulders of the country, and everyone has to carry his share. No one can withhold admiration from a country which has so gallantly tackled the problems of its own rehabilitation while bearing so heavy a weight of debt at the same time. What Germany has done in these years since the war, including the restoration of the financial situation after the inflation period, has been the result of the most Herculean labour on the part of the Government and the people. This enormous struggle has left the country tired and dried up, and has disheartened every one. Nerves are stretched to the utmost, and political tension still runs high throughout Germany.

But, above the tumult and fret of everyday life, above the actions and counter-actions of the parties, stands the President. He alone sounds the note of hope and encouragement, he alone keeps the whole country, in a certain measure, united. His has, indeed, been "a strange and wonderful fate," for it has fallen to his lot to see the foundation of the German Empire, to stand among the

distinguished company officers in Versailles for the *Kaiserproklamation*, and to pass from the highest military honours to the highest civil position in his country.

"War is the normal condition for a soldier," he had, as a young lieutenant, written to his parents. Perhaps this idea has never wholly left him—but he has come to realize that wars may be waged without guns and bloodshed. "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war," and it has been the task of the soldier to wrest for his country some victories of peace from the battles of the times. "Courage!" is his cry to the youth of Germany, that youth which has grown up under such different conditions from those which he knew as a young man. But it is German youth—it represents the new truth which opposes "ancient error." Hindenburg, perhaps, cannot quite bring himself to admit that the old order was really in error, because he was too closely identified with it. In 1920, he was still able to write that a State run according to Bismarckian principles seemed to him to be the best, and he, who had seen Bismarck at the height of his triumph, at the moment when his dream of empire became fact, could never forget the great man, and had always in his mind the knowledge that Bismarck had achieved the union of the German States at a time when the existence of the princes had made such union a most difficult and delicate task. Yet he had succeeded; and, years afterwards, Hindenburg followed in his footsteps so far as this basic idea was concerned, and tried to reunite all the States from which, however, the princes had been hunted away. Hindenburg, like Bismarck, has his dream, which is to bring not only all the States but

all classes of people, into the closest union and co-operation. He places the same value upon the clerk as upon the owner of the business, if only each does his job with all the strength of which he is capable. To him, there is nothing higher than the performance of duty, and to-day he holds the same view which he expressed in his *Aus meinem Leben*, in 1920, "no citizen possesses any right which does not carry with it a duty of equal weight." Of him, it must be admitted by every one that he has never refused any duty, however trifling it might be, nor withheld his attention from the dull details of routine which so many people simply allow to slide.

From one point of view, the Germans are a strangely tragic people. The many difficult periods of unrest and distress through which they have had to go have scattered them throughout the world. There are, in all countries, people of German extraction who have taken themselves and their labour to other lands than their own, and who, because they are so adaptable, have simply settled in the places of their adoption and have lost their German nationality. The Germans were always welcome colonists owing to their untiring industry and their powers of building up something from nothing. There is scarcely a nation in the world which has so many countrymen scattered in other countries. It has always been a great concern of Hindenburg that those Germans who are forced to-day by their business to live in foreign countries shall not forget their own, and shall continue to carry in their hearts an intimate consciousness that they are Germans. It is for this reason that he is always so glad to welcome to his house any man who lives and

works abroad, and to hear something about the conditions under which these distant countrymen of his are existing. His message to "foreign" Germans is always the same. "The other countries in which you work may be great, powerful and beautiful, but they are not Germany."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

HINDENBURG—THE MAN

LIKE Fichte, Hindenburg tells the people not to grow careless and simply to become accustomed to bad conditions of living, but to work that these may be improved, and the people answer his call as best they may. But the work required is not only "long, quiet, and peaceful"—it is uphill and laborious and the results are very slow in appearing.

It is hard for us to-day to reach a just estimate of what Hindenburg, the stiff, old soldier, has done for Germany, and it will be for future generations to value correctly just how far his work has gone along the paths he wished it to go. To-day, his countrymen affectionately call him "*der Vater des Volkes*,"* and the name is not inappropriate. His age and fame entitle him to the veneration of the young, which is wholeheartedly given him through the length and breadth of the land—the saviour of Prussia, the man whose influence alone preserved the Army from revolting at the end of the war, the man who, finally, in the face of adverse criticism at home and open hostility abroad, accepted the seat of President and has stilled all the expressed enmity towards himself and has done more than any other living man to give Germany back her place in the world. For this reason alone it should be acknowledged that this "least political of men" is the first man of his country living to-day. There are certainly men more skilled than he in the conduct of affairs, men with a wider horizon and a

*The people's father.

greater eloquence ; but there is about Hindenburg something rock-like, steady and still, which has acted reassuringly and healingly on the distracted people. That Hindenburg should now possess the trust and respect of the whole country is scarcely surprising, but that he should have possessed it in sufficient measure to give him the office of President at the elections is a matter which needs some probing to make it clear. The country had reacted violently against the old form of Government, against "*Militarismus*," and against all its supporters. In this reaction, one name alone retained its lustre—the name of Hindenburg. Every one knew that had the old Field-Marshal left his post in the hour when the Monarchy fell, there would have been none to restrain the returning Armies, none to organize the demobilization.

"I remained at my post," writes Hindenburg, and he superintended the whole gigantic work of disbanding the troops and seeing that the proud warriors of the old Army went quietly to their homes. He stayed at his post and saw them go, and he must have felt as if the whole world lay in ruins about him, for they were disappearing for ever and were taking their honours into the quiet of their homes. He who had been so proud of his soldiers was obliged to bid them go, and, soon after, he followed them into retirement.

Few will be found to dispute that this was one of the greatest Armies the world has ever seen, and yet, at the time when the war finished, it had small honour in its own country. The war-distracted people had ceased to look upon soldiers as heroes, and the "romance" of

fighting was no longer romance. We wish to repeat here that, in so far as Hindenburg was a supporter of militarist ideas, he had some justification for giving his support to the Army. He knew what the soldiers had endured in the trenches, and how hard it had been for them to fight on while they realized that only a spirit of sullen discontent existed in their homes. The great heart of the soldiers was something that their leader could never forget, and, though he is the President of a pacifist country, he never has forgotten it.

This man, who was a soldier, still loves the men of the old Army, still does all he can to help them in their civil life. These were they who kept the foot of the enemy out of Germany—how should he forget them? And he trusts to the spirit of the old Army to restore the prestige of the country. His most eloquent words plead with the people to do as much for Germany as those had done who died on the battle fronts, and his constant exhortations to the youth of the country always contain the words: "Be worthy of your fathers." It is the highest he can ask of them.

Hindenburg as Field-Marshal was a martinet, a man of iron with regard to matters of duty, a man whom his juniors respected and liked, but whose displeasure they certainly feared. As President, he has revealed himself as a deeply human man, to whom the distress of his country is as a personal grief to himself. He has devoted his whole life to its service and it almost seems as if the honours that have fallen to his share mean nothing to him. He is that most rare type of man who works simply from a sense of duty and who has no thought

of reward. His highest satisfaction is the realization of work well done. He can almost be compared with Longfellow's village blacksmith, that man who worked for the joy of working, who owed no man anything and who went to bed at night knowing that he had earned his night's repose.

It is a dull type of man; sober, religious and unpassionate; and in the life-story of a great man we like to read of spectacular deeds and of how he has trodden a shining pathway to eminence. All the better if he starts in an obscure place—for the contrast between his beginning and his end is the more dramatic. But of Hindenburg we cannot say that his life or his character is spectacular. He has followed the plain path of his duty, and has wielded an immense influence over his countrymen at a time when such influence as his was sorely wanted. He has given a moral support, where there was no one else to supply it. He is fortunate in that he is the right man in the right place at the right moment. Too often, we hear that this or that genius was born out of his time and his work has never come to fruition. Hindenburg was born at the right moment—it is improbable, had the course of events run more peacefully, that his name would ever have been known. In the year of the outbreak of war he was simply a retired General, and now he is the first man in his country. And all this fame and the greatest part of his life's work have come to him after retirement. He certainly little thought, when he went to his house at Hanover in 1911, that the best of his life did not lie behind him, but in front, or that in a few years' time he, himself, would

be the popular idol of the people. Yet, so it has turned out.

People have compared Hindenburg with all the great German military men—and these have been many—and have found points of resemblance between him and each of these historic characters, and, indeed, he does seem to have combined in himself the highest military qualifications of many of them, and he certainly possesses the “simplicity” of character which appears to have been part of the nature of every great soldier. Hindenburg has been compared even with Napoleon, though here, we must confess, we can see little similarity. Napoleon was everything that Hindenburg is not, and Napoleon was not a man whose greatness was of his time, but he would have risen to eminence at any period of the world’s history. Napoleon, too, was the pure egoist, who sought everything for himself and to whom his own desires counted for more than anything else. And Napoleon was as spectacular as a shooting-star, while Hindenburg is a very “plain, blunt man,” with none of the Corsican’s brilliance.

Hindenburg is one of those “famous men of little showing” whose work continues long after they have ceased to exist, whose harvest is great beyond their knowing. As Hindenburg stands at the head of the Government and the people, there is little doubt that he sees all that remains to be done more clearly than he is able to perceive the measure of what has already been achieved. He sees the riots and the miserable conditions which cause them, he sees party pit itself against party in a strife which has not entirely the well-being of the

country at heart. He sees the tumult and the insecurity, and the fierce partisanship which is to be found amongst all classes of the people. It must look to him as if his appeals for unity and singleness of purpose have fallen on deaf ears—but, for all that, his work lives vitally, and he has gone farther than he probably realizes along the road towards his goal. And all that he has done has been achieved simply by his personal example, for he is not a man of great intellectual powers, nor is he distinguished by any outward brilliance. He has, however, a fixed aim, and he has worked quietly and tirelessly to reach it, and has not deviated by a hair's-breadth from his chosen path. In all his life, nothing has tempted him to forsake his duty, and this is the reason why there is only respect for his name even amongst those classes of the people who were against his election. Professor Lessing's fear that a great soldier would be "miscast for a political rôle" has not been justified; for proof is everywhere visible that there could have been no better President than Hindenburg.

In 1929, Hindenburg wrote a short introduction to a book (*Deutsche Einheit Deutsche Freiheit*) which was published in honour of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Weimar Constitution. This preface shows once more, as all his writings and all his speeches show, that he still works to achieve the union of the country, and that his hopes for the future are in the youth of Germany. The preface reads as follows :

"No people has had to wrestle so fiercely for outward freedom and inward unity as the German. The

country, situated in the heart of Europe, with unprotected boundaries on all sides, has always been too easily attacked by foreign powers. Only by means of bitter fighting have we been able to preserve our independence, and only in the last century, after a long period of disunion, was it possible to lay the foundations for German nationality. The strong determination of the German people to be united and free has held together the joints of the State, even through the storm of the world war and the misery of the post-war time. The German people, in sacrificial devotion, has worked its way back to the light, through the home troubles and outward oppression that a hard peace has brought upon us.

“The conditions which our country needs to preserve its unity and freedom are self-confidence towards the other countries and unity at home. May the present generation, and, above all, the growing youth, learn from the past and from the trials of the time in which they live! Then they will know how to cherish and to inspire with new life the unity and freedom which their fathers earned in such severe struggles.

“VON HINDENBURG.”

These words bear the conviction of complete sincerity; they are simple sentences, indeed, but they go home to the hearts of the people to whom they are addressed. No one who has not been in Germany for a considerable period can have the least idea of how disruptive an effect the Revolution has had upon the country and just how

much the "troubles of the present day" have affected all the people from the lowest to the highest. In Germany, only a few years ago, the old saying, "Each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," had a peculiarly appropriate application. It certainly applied to all political parties, and the insidious gospel spread from them to the people. Finally, the voice of Hindenburg was raised, and he said, "For the country, I would allow both my hands to be cut off; but for the party—nothing!" Here was a strong word in season, coming from the mouth of a man whose patriotism had been proved before all the world, against whose good faith no word could be said. The people listened when he spoke, at first, because they venerated this almost legendary old man, and then, because they realized that his words contained vital truth. Poor Germany, torn into pieces by almost every kind of political, economical and moral dissension, listened to the voice which commanded her to cease strife and to try instead to regain her old place in the world.

It is often said that the child is father of the man, but Hindenburg seems to be an illustration, in this case, of the exception that proves the rule. He left his school, for instance, with a report which, though in the main good, accused him of a tendency to "chatter"! This was actually written of a man who, in later life, never spoke an unnecessary word, and in association with whose name the word "chatter" has a ridiculous sound. He was fairly industrious on the whole, but he was not uniformly hard-working, for, in the same report from school, we find that "his industry has recently

decreased.” There are plenty of lazy boys in Germany, but there are also very many whose one aim seems to be to pass through their schools with the utmost credit to themselves. Somehow, one would expect, from the military and the later record of Hindenburg, that he would have been found amongst these.

It is refreshing, therefore, to find that he chattered and was not constantly bending over his books, for, much as is to be read about his geniality, we are unable to find many traces of it in the story of his life. This is due, to some extent, to the facts that he seldom unbends in public and that his whole nature is so typically Prussian—that is to say, he is sober, without passion, and tremendously self-disciplined. We have elsewhere repeated a story which has a great claim to fame—for it tells us of the only occasion when Hindenburg was known to laugh on duty. It is a relief to us to know that he did laugh on that one occasion—for we feel that his life’s history is an unnaturally solemn one. In the story of almost every other great man we can find little, silly anecdotes, so that the picture presented is not one of unrelieved greatness—but in Hindenburg’s we cannot find many such. He is a serious man, who has carried, in his time, a greater weight of responsibility than almost any living human being. It is to his glory that he was great enough to accept this responsibility and that he has not failed anywhere. It is not fair to regard him simply as an animate rock, for he is a man who has deeply felt the hard fate of his country, and who has revealed a sensitive understanding of the needs of the present day.

It is very easy to be witty at the expense of such a type of man as Hindenburg. He is quite unable to defend himself against such attacks as that made upon him by the cheeky boy in Professor Lessing's class in the Hanover school. It is easy to sneer at Hindenburg's so-called *naïveté* and childishness, at his intellectual "Barbarei" and at his heavy seriousness. But we should feel it an ignoble form of amusement, and we should not feel that we had come off victorious even though he remained inarticulate and helpless under our humorous sallies. Hindenburg's sure defence against this type of "baiting" is his simplicity and sincerity. We think we are justified in calling Hindenburg a great man despite his obvious limitations. We are not speaking now of what he has accomplished, for, as previously indicated, we are not yet in a position to judge exactly how far his work will continue. We refer now to the man himself, and we find an intrinsic greatness in his character. He is a strong man, in that he has entirely cast off his original prejudices at an age when most men are too rigidly set in their mental attitude to be able even to contemplate a change. He is a great man because he subordinated himself to a new *régime* for the sake of the country, and certainly, by so doing, he saved immeasurable distress.

And now, since 1925, he has held the post of President, and has fulfilled the manifold duties of his office with great honour to himself. He is the idol of the people, "Vater Hindenburg," and he stands for all that was best in the old order. The young Republic, having finally thrown off the former Government, has yet heeded Hindenburg's appeals to them not to forget what they

owe to the past. Tradition is a great, fine-sounding word, and it must not be lightly regarded as old-fashioned and musty. A people cannot escape from its traditions simply by driving away its kings and princes. Hindenburg, an old man, "too old to believe in sudden changes," with all the weight of his tradition behind him, has nevertheless been the man who has shown new Germany her appointed path. He, with his old, experienced eyes, saw the way through the tangle of present-day affairs, and he was the first to show how the way might be cleared. "Germany has lost her belief in herself—but I have never lost my faith in the German people. I know that they will once more occupy their old, honourable place in the world."

Hindenburg! The name is solid and heavy like the character of its owner—but we think, when the history of the present has become old, that this is the name which will be most honoured. Alfred Niemann, in his *Hindenburg*, tells a story of how a French princess passed through the German capital on a journey. She left the train and took her children to look at the "Iron Hindenburg" in the Königsplatz.

"Regardez," she said to them, "*c'est un homme ! Souvenez-vous en toujours !*"

She was right in her estimate, and we think her words make a proper ending to this book.

"*C'est un homme !*"



